

Value crisis in contemporary sports

Kryzys wartości we współczesnym sporcie

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Słowa kluczowe

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to specify selected symptoms of the value crisis in physical culture, manifested in deviant behaviours in the contemporary sports environment. An analysis of the sports press and popular pieces of sports literature allowed drawing the conclusion that contemporary sports is degraded to the greatest extent by doping. Furthermore, corruption and politics, especially of authoritarian and totalitarian states, racism and various forms of violence, especially sexual violence are contributing to the dehumanisation of sports. The paper also describes attempts of counteracting harmful phenomena in sports and their effects for improving the image of sports.

Abstrakt

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest charakterystyka wybranych przejawów kryzysu wartości w kulturze fizycznej, objawiających się dewiacyjnymi zachowaniami we współczesnym środowisku sportowym. Analiza zawartości prasy sportowej oraz treści popularnych pozycji literatury sportowej pozwoliła wyciągnąć wnioski, że współczesny sport w największym stopniu degradowany jest przez doping farmakologiczny. Ponadto do dehumanizacji sportu przyczynia się korupcja, polityka, szczególnie państw autorytarnych i totalitarnych, rasizm oraz różne formy przemocy, zwłaszcza przemoc seksualna. W artykule opisane zostały także próby przeciwdziałania szkodliwym zjawiskom w sporcie oraz efekty, jakie przyniosły te działania dla poprawy jego wizerunku.

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Prolegomena to sports axiology

The ethical problems in the sports world that we currently equate with the value crisis in physical culture are not a new phenomenon. One can get an impression that the problems intensified in the XXI century and their perception is highlighted by the mass media which, through the generation of increasingly intense information overload, contributed to the audience becoming accustomed to the deviant behaviours observed in sports.

For many years sports have been a significant component of global culture and are affecting it as such. Similarly to other social phenomena, it is also subject to evolutionary changes. The process also features new values coming into the fore. Some of them wane, while others are reinforced. The ones that sports ethics' creators are counting on not always get reinforced. Since its inception, the sports world had potential to create positive values, but also to develop anti-values and any type of negative social phenomena¹. Mass culture also encompasses some aspects of physical culture. By the end of the XX century it was noted that it constitutes its imminent element². Contemporary sports, the physical culture segment most highlighted by mass media, adopted so many mass culture features that it began to create a common whole with it. Competitive sports, practised at the highest level by widely recognised professionals, is the guarantor of its cohesion and its further expansion is favoured mainly by the self-interest of the sports environment's representatives.

Sports, similarly to humanism, is derived from European culture, it therefore has analogous ideological sources axiological face. Treated as a social and cultural institution as well as a type of human activity, it is permeated from its inception by humanist ideas. In the recommendations of Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympic movement, sports should favour the development and popularisation of ideas serving humanity.³

¹ J. Nowocień, *Zwyciężaj, ale nie podstępem*, interview conducted by D. Przybylski, [in:] *Rozmowy w blasku olimpijskiego znicza*, (eds.) W. Firek, K. Płoszaj, D. Przybylski, Opole 2016, pp. 45-46.

² W. Rekowski, *Kultura masowa i kultura fizyczna*, [in:] *Socjologia kultury fizycznej*, (ed.) Z. Krawczyk, Warsaw 1995, p. 63.

³ Z. Krawczyk, *Sport w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie*, Warsaw 2000, p. 45.

Contemporary sports ethics principles became developed as part of aristocratic sports in the XVIII and XIX century. It drew inspiration from chivalry and the English gentleman's model. When creating the foundations of the Olympic movement, Pierre de Coubertin cited the ancient Greeks and consciously created his own, perfect image of antique sports. Coubertin's objective when he rekindled antique sports games was initially far from what the games' ideology is now. His life's true passion was education, especially education through sports. He considered recognising a sportsman only in terms of his somatic aspects is too one-dimensional. Olympism demanded treating a human as a creator and recipient of material and spiritual culture. A being that lives not only in the physical realm, but also in a symbolic realm, the components of which are: language, mythos, art and religion. The Olympic movement created by humanists proposed an axiological system pretending to be universal⁴.

Contemporary physical culture draws the ways of human dispute by battling its deviant behaviours and pathologies. Deviant behaviours and any manifestations of sports' dehumanisation are not understood unequivocally and their sources are sought outside the sports world. Researchers that analyse the problems of contemporary sports try to prove that they concern not only sports as such, but situations in which they found themselves in contemporary societies, while pathologies observed in sports also concern other fields of social life. Sports never were and are not better or worse than other realm of human life. They were and are how they were and are created by people. Social deviant behaviours are a threat to sports and contemporary sports, which are subject to multi-faceted, mainly mercantile, forms of success, are their carrier⁵.

It is also necessary to note that the crisis in physical culture mainly concerns axiology and coincides in time with the sports' economic and media expansion. The profits generated by sports in the XXI century reached unimaginable values which are absolutely unachievable for many forms of human activity. This process was only halted by the crisis caused by Covid-19. For example, in France, where a new 4-year broadcasting contract in Ligue 1 (the highest competition class in football) increased in value by 60% in relation to the previous one and amounts to EUR 1.153 billion per season, the losses

⁴ W. Firek, *Filozofia olimpizmu Pierre'a de Coubertina*, Warsaw 2016, pp. 36-43, 57.

⁵ T. Bohdan, *Polska prasa sportowa wobec dewiacji współczesnego sportu*, [in:] *Sport i turystyka. Uwarunkowania historyczne i wyzwania współczesności*, (eds.) M. Kazmierczak, J. Kosiewicz, Poznan 2012, p. 293.

caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will probably reach EUR 1 billion within two years⁶.

The purpose of this paper is to specify selected symptoms of the value crisis in physical culture, manifested in deviant behaviours in the contemporary sports environment. After conducting a critical analysis of selected sports press titles and popular sports literature pieces, the author is attempting to answer the question of what phenomena mostly contribute to the degradation of contemporary sports. Furthermore, the author is describing the attempts to counteract those harmful phenomena and their effects on the sports' image. Due to the paper's limited volume, the author focused on demonstrating only selected deviant behaviours in sports.

Phenomena depreciating contemporary sports

Even before World War II, athletes, fans and journalists ostentatiously manifested their respect for the opponent and devotion to fair play. This was the case even in fascist Italy and Hitler's Germany, i.e. in countries where sports were treated instrumentally and used by politicians.

When in May 1938 Germany was visited by the English national team, compliance with the principles of sports etiquette became particularly important. Germans admired the English football for its sportsmanship nearly to the same degree as for its high level. After the match, people emphasised that no foul was committed during it. The English players knew that the must play in a way worth of the best British sports traditions.⁷

The gold medal in football during the Olympics in Berlin in 1936 was won by Italy which beat Austria 2:1 in the finals. Italy's victory was even more impressive as, in the name of fair play, they delegated a team composed of students, whereas other teams featured secret professionals, which was forbidden in the times of amateur sports⁸.

The fair play spirit was also present outside of Europe. We can also find examples of chivalrous competition in the southern hemisphere. However, the fast-growing popularity of football contributed to the degradation of moral requirements towards the players. The fans, when admiring gentlemen play, were aware that football's roots are related to everyday competition and that street rivalry is accompanied by a dose of violence. The acceptance of the loosening of ethical ties became an irreversible trend. Negative emo-

⁶ A. Onrubia, *Ligue 1 syndicate forecasts enormous losses for club*, [in:] https://en.as.com/en/2020/07/23/football/1595532133_684501.html (accessed on 23.07.2020).

⁷ S. Kuper, *Futbol w cieniu Holokaustu*, translated by Ł. Golowanow, Gdansk, 2013, p. 71.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 62.

tions could not have been controlled during the first football World Cup final between Uruguay and Argentina in 1930. The hostility and aggression which were to give colour to the rivalry very quickly took over the stands. The Argentine players tried to play fair and avoid hard fouls. However, a lot of reservation was raised by the Uruguayans' rough play and their off-pitch fouls in the form of anonymous telephones and threat letters⁹.

Despite the fact that the moral requirements limiting the players were becoming increasingly limited over the years, we can find a model example of fair play at the peak of world sports in the second half of the XX century. An unquestionable role model for young football players was Gaetano Scirea, an Italian who was never sent off or suspended during his entire career¹⁰.

After World War II, the deviant phenomena degrading the humanist values in sports intensified. These mainly include the following: doping, using sports as a tool for politics, corruption and racism.

Doping is known from the beginning of modern sports, but it started to become a problem after World War II, contributing to the distortion of sports rivalry results and depersonalisation of athletes' bodies. The greatest degeneracy in this scope was taking place in the German Democratic Republic, where sports were treated instrumentally and politically. In order to coordinate the fight against doping in sports, in 1999 the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established under the leadership of the International Olympic Committee. The most popular sports disciplines affected by doping to the greatest degree include: cycling, athletics and weightlifting. Their image was tarnished the most in the last decades and further scandals reported by the media contributed to a certain degree to sweep the disciplines from prohibited practices on one hand, but also reinforced the public's opinion about a permanent crisis in these sports on the other hand.

In cycling, the most popular scandals broke out from the end of the 1990's. These mainly included the following: scandal in the Festina group in 1998, Operacion Puerto in 2006, Armstrong's scandal in 2012¹¹ and the Aderlass operation in 2019. The last of the aforementioned scandals started during the World Ski Championships in Seefeld, where five ski runners related to an

⁹ J. Wilson, *Aniołowie o brudnych twarzach*, translated by M. Okoński, Cracow 2018, pp. 60, 87.

¹⁰ A. Digby, *Juventus. Historia w biało-czarnych barwach*, translated by M. Nowomiej-ski, Cracow 2016, p. 110.

¹¹ T. Bohdan, *Łamanie zasady fair play jako przejaw kryzysu współczesnego sportu*, [in:] *Fair play w sporcie, edukacji i życiu*, (eds.) Z. Borysiuk, J. Kostorz, Opole 2017, pp. 65-68.

international doping network, among others, were arrested¹². It later turned out that cyclists are also involved in illegal blood transfusions.

The biggest shock for fans was however the information that Lance Armstrong was using doping. The American, who won the prestigious Tour de France seven times, was not a regular champion. The public deemed him a hero of a successful fight with cancer and a foundation creator providing aid to sick people. However, Armstrong turned out to be ruthless and was not only able to cheat to win, but also to force his teammates to cheat as well. Due to the fact that he was riding in a peleton of many cyclists that used doping, he still thinks that his wins in the Tour de France should count. Armstrong insists that the victories happened, people did not forget about them, and he doesn't regret using doping. He also said that none of his rivals claimed any of the seven titles, which is why according to the cycling authorities' provisions the titles will always be vacant¹³.

Armstrong's arrogant attitude is not common. Marco Pantani, an Italian cyclist, reacted completely differently to the accusations of using doping. In June 1999, after the tests conducted during the Giro d'Italia demonstrated 52% of haematocrit content in his blood sample, which meant that he exceeded the safe limit by 2%, the athlete isolated himself from the public for several weeks¹⁴. Unfortunately, the attempt to avoid the media storm was also the beginning of the cyclist's depression which, in combination with drug use, led to his early death in 2004 at the age of just 34¹⁵.

Sports disciplines that are not able, for various reasons, to limit the doping pathology are at risk of being banned from the Olympic family. The weightlifting environment has the greatest cause for concern.

Each year, the list of weightlifters suspended for doping is expanded by several dozen of names. The discipline is second in the shameful ranking, just after athletics which is practiced by a much larger number of professionals. If the situation does not get better, the Tokyo Olympics will be last for the sports discipline. Its sport at the Paris Olympics in 2024 is conditional. The doping problem mainly concerns such states as: Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia. Disturbing incidents also took place in Africa, where the presence of banned substances was detected in two 14-year old female athletes from Egypt. The weightlifting environment's representatives

¹² K. Rawa, *Operacja „Puszczanie krwi”*, „Rzeczpospolita” 2019, No. 50, p. 28.

¹³ R. Moore, *Tour de France. Etapy, które przeszły do historii*, translated by B. Sałbut, Cracow 2018, pp. 302-303.

¹⁴ M. Rendell, *Marco Pantani. Ostatni podjazd*, translated by B. Sałbut, Cracow 2020, pp. 208-214.

¹⁵ C. O'Brien, *Giro d'Italia. Historia najpiękniejszego kolarskiego wyścigu świata*, translated by B. Sałbut, Cracow 2017, pp. 256-257.

are aware that without educating the athletes and coaches about the health, social and legal consequences of using doping, including its destructive effect on the discipline's image, it will be impossible to accelerate the discipline's cleansing¹⁶.

Even in such countries as Poland, where doping is a marginal problem, drastic steps are taken towards weightlifters. Prior to the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, during the doping scandal involving the Zieliński brothers, who were expelled from the Olympic village, the then Minister of Sports, Witold Bańka (Head of WADA from 2020) threatened that the ministry will consider a total suspension of the subsidies for weightlifting or their severe limitation for the senior team and competitive sport. If the discipline is not cleansed, if no serious changes take place in it, the ministry will make radical decisions¹⁷.

The greatest doping problem encountered by the sports environment in the recent years was the illegal athlete aid system supported by the Russian state¹⁸. It was possible to determine, and probably to limit in consequence, the scale of doping frauds in Russia. The global sports authorities did not take similar steps in the case of Kenya. The country did not have a local anti-doping committee for years. Foreign controllers that visited Kenya limited their work only to collecting urine samples. Blood was not sampled, because the time of its transport to the closest laboratory exceeded the regulatory limits. An athlete caught on doping would therefore be able to defend himself by demonstrating that procedures were breached. Many of the controlled athletes were warned about the planned controller busts, which testifies to the fictional fight against doping in the country. However, despite confirming the doping corruption, Kenya was not penalised the same way as Russia. It was deemed that private doping cannot be equated with centrally controlled procedure accepted by the state, as in the case of Russia¹⁹.

The fact of the state's interest in physical culture cannot be explicitly perceived as its ennoblement. Many states recognise the social values of physical culture, but there are also those that treat it instrumentally.

The fascist Italy used the propaganda potential of sports already in the interwar period. Football was especially treated as a tool for political games. The regime took over control over the Italian Football Association, designated the discipline's development direction and managed it to a certain de-

¹⁶ B. Klimas, *Mocni ludzie w strachu*, „Rzeczpospolita” 2019, No. 18, p. 28.

¹⁷ R. Leniarski, *Kto wyczyści brudną siłownię*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2016, No. 188, p. 24.

¹⁸ J. Bińczyk, *Rosjanie z mentalnością homodopingovicus*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2019, No. 135, p. 23.

¹⁹ P. Wilkowicz, *Uprzejmie donoszę, za 10 tysięcy funtów*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2016, No. 184, p. 22.

gree²⁰. Politicians treated instrumentally the Olympics in Berlin in 1936, in Moscow in 1980 and, in recent times, in Beijing in 2008. Currently, the state's political engagement in sports can be observed to the most spectacular degree in Russia, Azerbaijan and Qatar.²¹ The latter is extremely effective at developing its power by using the so-called soft power instruments. These also include multi-million sports investments, e.g. the purchase of the Paris Saint Germain football club in 2012 or the organisation of world cups in many sports disciplines, but mainly the football World Cup in 2022. The investments, especially the latter are associated with much controversy. In order to build modern arenas and infrastructure, Qatar imported hundreds of thousands of workers from poorer Asian countries, mainly from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines. For many years, the workers were treated like slaves by confiscating their passports and thus preventing them from pursuing their rights at a court in the fight for outstanding wages or retaining them at work camps without access to running water²².

Qatar was granted the right to organise the football World Cup as result of corrupt acts, paying 1.6 million dollars in cash per vote²³. It is therefore worth remembering that corruption in sports (in all forms and degrees) is a global phenomenon that is a threat to the entire sports movement. The entire sports industry is threatened by corruption and its forms include various frauds and bribery that may be individual or systemic. Corrupt activities substantially lower sports' reputation in the eyes of the public²⁴.

Due to corruption, the reputation of, e.g. football officials suffered. Former UEFA president and a famous player in the past, Michel Platini was detained and interrogated in the French prosecutor's office on the selection of Qatar as the World Cup host. Platini, who pleads innocent in the entire affair, was excluded by FIFA from any activity in football several years back. He was conducting suspicious business with the former FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, from whom he accepted 2 million Swiss francs of allegedly outstanding remuneration²⁵.

²⁰ J. Foot, *Calcio. Historia włoskiego futbolu*, translated by M. Nowomiejski, Cracow 2019, pp. 62, 507-509.

²¹ T. Bohdan, *Dehumanizacja sportu na łamach prasy*, [in:] *Aksjologiczny wymiar sportu*, (eds.) Z. Borysiuk, Z. Kostorz, Opole 2014, pp. 229-231.

²² T. Kądziała, *Stadiony za miliony, praca za darmo*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2019, No. 226, pp. 4-5.

²³ Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁴ L.A. Kihl, J. Skinner, T. Engelberg, *Corruption in sport: understanding the complexity of corruption*, „European Sport Management Quarterly” 2017, No. 17:1, pp. 1-5, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2016.1257553.

²⁵ D. Piechota, *Platini zatrzymany*, "Przegląd Sportowy" 2019, No. 142, p. 20.

The media are regularly reporting on corruption scandals most often related to match fixing²⁶. On the other hand, sports literature features quite bizarre attempts at explaining this procedure, referring to the social situation of the given country.

Ryszard Niedziela, the former chairman of the Odra Opole football club, the main witness in the corruption scandal in Polish football stated that:

In Poland, the procedure was that settling a matter in your favour required you to hand over a cut: the physician had to get his cut, because someone in the family is sick; the referee had to get his cut to favour your team; the police had to get his cut to not register penalty points; the priest had to get his cut when he came for a visit after carolling²⁷.

The former chairman's statement can only reassure us that sports at the highest level generate such high profits that they often become too great a temptation for people acting in it and deriving benefits from sports activity, i.e. players, managers, referees and officials.

Despite the fact that sports in the XXI century features many media slogans concerning equality and tolerance, the racism problem is still present at the arenas. It is not the racism that we encountered in the second half of the XX century, which mainly concerned segregation. Currently, we are dealing with various forms of discrimination. On one hand, these include forms of verbal racism known from the previous decades occurring, e.g. in Russian arenas and in the public debate on naturalised players²⁸. On the other hand, these feature new problems exposed, among others, by the Black Lives Matter movement.

In Great Britain, during the debate on racist comments aimed at black players, it was noted that for every 63 reporters sent by the national press to the Russian World Cup only one was black, which means that the race proportions in editorials grossly deviates from the social diversity²⁹. A similar problem concerns managers working in the English football. In 91 clubs from the top four leagues, only 5 people with the skin colour other than white are managers, which amounts to 5.5% of the employed managers³⁰.

²⁶ J. Koliński, *Afera korupcyjna w hiszpańskiej piłce*, "Przegląd Sportowy" 2019, No. 124, p. 7.

²⁷ R. Stęporowski, R. Niedziela, *Mafia Fryzjera*, Opole 2007, p. 33.

²⁸ J. Bińczyk, *Złe oko dla Afrorosjanina*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2019, No. 71, p. 17.

²⁹ R. Stec, *Piłkarz oskarża Anglię o rasizm*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2018, No. 289, p. 19.

³⁰ M. Grez, D. Lewis, Z. Nabbi, *Why English football can't afford another 'lost generation' of Black coaches*, [in:] <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/08/football/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-coaching-scheme-english-football-premier-league-spt-intl/index.html> (accessed on 09.07.2020).

Football casters also demonstrate racial prejudices. According to the research of the Danish RunRepeat, published in the English press, players with lighter skin colour were more often praised by casters for their intelligence, high level of play and hard work. On the other hand, players with darker skin colour were praised more for their athleticism, mainly strength and pace. The research utilised English commentary from people working for seven broadcasters: Sky Sports, BT Sport, FreeSports, beIN Sports, TSN, NBCSN and ESPN³¹.

The above information may be puzzling, because discrimination in English football is fought against for many years. From 1993, it featured the Let's Kick Racism Out of Football campaign, which in 1997 was transformed into the Kick It Out organisation. Its purpose is to counteract discrimination and encourage integration and tolerance. From the 2012/2013 season, the organisation is receiving reports on discrimination and hate in the social media³². Its activities promoting equality, diversity and understanding do not however meet the expectations of many black players.

Attempts at re-igniting humanistic values in contemporary sports

For many years, counteracting harmful phenomena in sports has been the task of various domestic and international organisations, sports associations and sports competition participants, fans and sports journalists. The fight for restoring humanistic values in sports is difficult, because new, more and more refined ideas to achieve the expected result at any cost emerge. This applied to doping.

The initial reasons for using banned substances encompassed the achievement of success by improving results, financial gains, improving regeneration and counteracting nutritional deficiencies as well as convincing players that other athletes are also using it. Despite the fact that most athletes admits that doping is fraud and bears the risk of sanctions, they generally recognise its effectiveness. Furthermore, the sports environment features the opinion that anti-doping programs are ineffective³³.

³¹ S. Nakrani, *Groundbreaking report reveals racial bias in English football commentary*, [in:] <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/29/groundbreaking-report-reveals-racial-bias-in-english-football-commentary> (accessed on 29.06.2020).

³² H. Bennett, A. Jonsson, *Klick it out. Tackling online discrimination in football*, [in:] *Sport and Discrimination*, (eds.) D. Kilvington, J. Price, New York 2017, pp. 203-204.

³³ J. Morente-Sánchez, M. Zabala, *Doping in Sport: A Review of Elite Athletes' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Knowledge*, „Sports Med.” 2013, No. 43, pp. 395-411, doi.org/10.1007/s40279-013-0037-x.

A large gateway for fraud and source of doubt in the achieved result is the Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE), i.e. the athlete's right to use a banned substance or method listed in the List of banned substances and methods³⁴.

The most controversies in the recent years concerned the approach to take asthma medication based on TUE in skiing and cycling.

The organisers of the Tour de France, wanting to restore the event's credibility after spectacular doping scandals from prior years decided to disqualify Chris Froome from the race in 2018. The Briton riding in the Sky group (currently Ineos Grenadiers) was suspected of illegal use of therapeutic exclusions and abusing asthma medication, while several months earlier during the Vuelta a Espana race he substantially exceeded the allowed dose of asthma medication – salbutamol. The race's regulations allowed the organiser to disqualify a cyclist whose presence may negatively affect the event's image or reputation.. However, due to the lack of penalty imposed on the cyclist by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) and WADA, he was admitted to start in the race³⁵.

The fight with corruption, combined with an exchange in authorities in world football ended with an even greater disgrace. When prominent officials implicated in corrupt procedures, such as Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini, were forced to resign, the public was being convinced that football is opening a new, clean chapter. The power in FIFA was seized by Gianni Infantino, who proclaimed slogans about cleaning football up and counteracting greed. However, in 2020 the Swiss special attorney, appointed to investigate the FIFA president's contacts with the former Swiss attorney general Michael Lauber, initiated a criminal proceeding against Infantino. Lauber managed the investigations on corruption in FIFA in a way that protected the most important football officials. Furthermore, he was secretly meeting Infantino and his subordinate officers contacted FIFA lawyers. He is the first attorney general in the history of the Swiss democracy against whom procedure of dismissal from office was initiated. The investigation on corruption during the German World Cup supervised by him ended with the limitation period's expiry³⁶.

³⁴ Polish Anti-Doping Agency, *Wylaczenia dla celow terapeutycznych*, [in:] <https://www.anty doping.pl/wylaczenia-dla-celow-terapeutycznych/> (accessed on 29.07.2020).

³⁵ O. Kwiatkowski, *Francuzi nie chcą Chrisa Froome'a*, "Rzeczpospolita" 2018, No. 151, p. 32.

³⁶ P. Wilkowicz, *Skandal w Szwajcarii: prokurator generalny straci posade, bo tak prowadzil sledztwa w FIFA, zeby Infantino byl zadowolony?*, [in:] <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,64946,25965110,skandal-w-szwajcarii-prokurator-generalny-straci-posade-bo.html#s> (accessed on 02.08.2020).

An attempt to restore the humanistic values in sports and refer to Pierre de Coubertin's idea was the exhibition in numerous publications of the educational role of sports, especially of the fair play rule treated as an educational instrument. However, the media information on cases of ruthless abuse of the subtle relation between master and student in clubs and sports associations has seriously challenged the projection of sports as an educational mean.

In 2016, the British public was moved by information about sexual crimes of football coaches against boys training in professional and amateur sports clubs. A year later, cases of sexual harassment of female and male skiers in an Austrian sports school were revealed. In the USA, a former physician of the gymnastic national team, Larry Nassar has sexually abused over 250 female athletes. In 2019, the South Korean sports ministry revealed study results demonstrating that over 37% of female athletes in South Korea experienced sexual harassment at least once during their career³⁷. On the other hand, the report published by the French sports ministry in 2020 demonstrated sexual abuse and violence in the French figure skating, where generations of coaches were allowed to prey on their protégées in an atmosphere of secrecy³⁸. British Gymnastics already announced a similar investigation due to the allegations of female athletes who were starved, beaten and mentally abused³⁹.

It was attempted to save the deteriorated image of poor sports by a broad media promotion of Paralympic sports. The climax of this campaign was the record popularity of the London Paralympics in 2012. It was then that athletes with disabilities were referred to as real athletes in the media. The media was presenting an idealised image of the Paralympics as a competition of ordinary, authentic people fighting with their weaknesses and playing sports in their free time. It turned out that many fans and sports journalists expect sports rivalry without the excessive commercialisation and deviant behaviours. One must however be aware that sports for the disabled are becoming increasingly similar to the competitions of able-bodied athletes and is not free of pathologic behaviours. Paralympic sports also feature scandals and issues. For example, during the Sydney Paralympics in 2000, the gold medal

³⁷ D. Senkowski, „Byłam gwałcona przez trenera. Miałam 10 lat, gdy to się wydarzyło po raz pierwszy”, [in:] <https://www.sport.pl/inne/7,64998,25968684,bylam-gwalcona-przez-trenera-mialam-10-lat-gdy-to-sie-wydarzylo.html#s> (accessed on 23.06.2020).

³⁸ A. Sage, *21 French ice skating coaches suspected of abuse*, [in:] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/21-french-ice-skating-coaches-suspected-of-abuse-586mdb8qm> (accessed on 05.08.2020).

³⁹ J. Pinches, *There is a culture of fear permeating through the whole of gymnastics and it has to stop*, [in:] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gymnastics/2020/07/08/culture-fear-permeating-whole-gymnastics-has-stop/> (accessed on 08.07.2020).

in basketball was won by the Spanish female basketball team, which was supposed to be composed of intellectually disabled players. It was a journalist investigation that demonstrated that the team mostly featured athletes who have not undergone the required medical examination⁴⁰.

These sports also do not lack controversies. Since Oscar Pistorius, there has been a debate on carbon fibre prostheses and technological doping⁴¹. The topic causes considerable emotions in the entire sports environment, because athletes such as Markus Rehm or Blake Leeper, who were aware of the results they achieved, wanted to compete with able-bodied athletes and add Olympic medals to their collection of Paralympic trophies⁴².

Final notes

An analysis of the sports press and popular pieces of sports literature allowed for drawing the conclusion that contemporary sports is degraded to the greatest extent by doping. Furthermore, racism and various forms of violence, especially sexual violence are contributing to the dehumanisation of sports. On the other hand, corrupt activity, which is reprehensible in the moral sense, also leads to breaching the legal standards in most states, thereby substantially tarnishing the image of sports. Instrumental treatment of sports is a phenomenon common in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

The most important sports institutions in the world are trying to counteract harmful phenomena in sports, unfortunately to no good effect. This is because in the contemporary, commercialised sports the attention of decision-makers is attracted by other problems. These include the ageing television audience, especially in countries where broadcasting income are highest or the e-sports competition related to this phenomenon. All the more that e-sports are attracting not only young people, but are also extremely appealing to disabled persons, because it overcomes the limitations deriving

⁴⁰ T. Bohdan, *Sport osób z niepełnosprawnościami na łamach polskiej prasy sportowej*, [in:] *Niepełnosprawność w aspekcie społecznym, kulturowym i edukacyjnym*, (eds.) T. Bohdan, J. Charaśna-Blachucik, Opole 2016, pp. 60–64, 70–71.

⁴¹ J. Carlin, *Tajemnica Oscara Pistoriusa*, translated by A. Sokołowska-Ostapko, Cra-cow 2015, pp. 96, 113–114.

⁴² Ł. Jachimiak, *Biegacz bez nóg ucieknie pełnosprawnym na igrzyskach w Tokio? „Trudno uwierzyć, że nie ma przewagi”*, [in:] <https://www.sport.pl/lekkoatletyka/7,64989,26125421,trudno-uwierzyc-ze-protezy-nie-daja-przewagi-biegacz-bez.html> (accessed on 14.07.2020).

from bodily dysfunction. A disabled e-athlete can compete with his or his able-bodied team in the digital world⁴³.

A new threat that absorbs the attention of the sports officials is the Covid-19 pandemic and the related problems, i.e. cancellation or postponement of planned sports events, including such events as the Olympics and any type of limits concerning the audience, which noticeably affects the financial results achieved by the clubs and sports organisations.

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⁴³ T. Michaluk, K. Pezdek, *Rozproszone wydarzenia sportowe. Podmiotowość i cielosność w e-sportach*, [in:] *Filozoficzne i społeczne aspekty sportu i turystyki*, (eds.) J. Kosiewicz, E. Małolepszy, T. Drozdek-Małolepsza, Częstochowa 2016, pp. 58-61.

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