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## The principle of fair play in education of football fans

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**Keys words:** sport fans, stadium hooligans, fair play

### Abstract

In this study, an attempt has been made to characterize football fans in the context of the possibility of counteracting undesirable behaviour of audiences by sport education and promotion of the principle of fair play. It was assumed that this idea, as a universal value in sport and life, is understandable to all people and widely accepted.

### Introduction

We characterise the audience due to the degree of involvement in the sports spectacle: as spectators and supporters. The spectator is a person who is curious about the events, indifferent to one of the parties to the sports competition. The supporter, however, is a person

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who is emotionally involved on one of the competing sides – he/ she wants a victory. As Matusewicz rightly put it, "he is supporting and not watching."

Aggression and violence at football stadiums are social problems, indicated as one of the biggest threats to modern sport. The reasons for aggressive behaviour should be seen both in the situation that initiates them and in the broader socio-cultural scope. 'Hooligans' do not fight "against everyone". Individual teams of 'scarfmen' create various arrangements with each other, deciding to support not only in the fighting but also joint support.

Football 'hooligans' are the least numerous, but the most recognizable group and - due to expansiveness - the most visible of four of them: 'ultras', 'picnics', 'hooligans' and 'scarfmen'. They try to mark their presence with 'power exhibitions'. As the philosopher Tomasz Sahaj writes; "As football hooligans grow in strength, they are claiming ever greater grudges not only to the football area and its surroundings. (...) they are trying to gain supremacy in some larger city territories or during non-sport social events." In fact, racist or anti-Semitic slogans do not stem from beliefs, but very often from thoughtlessness and a lack of understanding of their meaning - here one needs not just punishments but education. The ideology of football hooligans is further described by Tomasz Sahaj - in many cities, including Łódź, historical events (despite the lack of knowledge of their significance) have not been completely blurred and often still deepen.

### **Football fans - characteristics**

Sport is an integral part of human life so most of us more or less sympathize with a certain sport discipline or a particular sports club. A fan is a "spectator watching sports games, a frequent visitor to stadiums and sports halls, supporters of a club, team or player. A fan is a representative of a specific type of behaviour called support, which differs from the behaviour recognized in non-sport situations and introduces new forms of expressing sports experiences and emotions"<sup>2</sup>. For some people, cheering is almost as important as work and family life - they devote a lot of attention to events related to their favourite club and willingly participate in sports shows with the participation of their idols.

The most popular and spectacular sport disciplines in the European culture - as Halina Zdebska emphasizes<sup>3</sup> - are team sports games, especially football. This is favoured, among

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<sup>2</sup> K. Hądzelek (red.) *Mała Encyklopedia Sportu. A-K*. Wydawnictwo „Sport i Turystyka”, Warszawa 1984, s. 268.

<sup>3</sup> H. Zdebska, *Piękno sportu – piękno widowiska*, „Kultura Fizyczna”, nr 9-12/2010, s. 7.

others, by the specificity of sports competition (frequent changes in the pace of the action, turns of the situation, unpredictable effect of competition). It is not limited to observing players, but also becomes tangles of bond between all participants: sport players, coaches, organizers, referees and finally supporters.

Football fans can be included in a separate group, you can even talk about a social subculture. It is not about everyone who likes football, but about those for whom cheering is an important aspect of life, to which they devote their free time.

The homeland of football - as a sport discipline - is England, in which in the late 1960s the first groups of stadium hooligans appeared. Although the tradition of supporting football already existed, its specifics began to change - from the local working class environment to the commercialisation of football together with the culture of supporting it today<sup>4</sup>.

For the 'scarfmen' the opposing team's fans and players are perceived as enemies, they are the recipients of vulgar shouts and chants. Aggression against the team itself usually remains at a symbolic level, while aggression against the supporters of the opposing team is direct and usually turns into a fight - before, during and after the match. In this way, you emphasize your presence towards 'strangers', i.e. supporters of another football club. Often, such feuds are national or religious.

The main enemy of every hooligan fan is the police. There are three powerful supporters' arrangements: 'agreement', 'scythe' and 'arrangement'. This division is not clear. Determined by leaders, there is often a rule that my friend's friend is my friend. "There is in Poland there are several regions where battles most often occur, triggered by hooligans"<sup>5</sup>.

Stadiums are not the only places where feuded fans fight. These fights also take place on the way to and from the match. From here, fans traveling around the country are escorted by police prevention units. There is a special group of hooligans who start brawls in connection with matches and not necessarily at stadiums. They, however, are much less than 'supporters'<sup>6</sup>.

"Scarfmen are a youth subculture that is closely related to supporters, but most often supporters of individual sports clubs, not specific sports disciplines or shows. This can be seen, for example, by watching inscriptions on flags hanging on fences, separating fans from the football field, such as: "Łódź is my city, ŁKS is my life", "Lechia is us ... Lechia are

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4 W. Wrzesień., *Krótki historia młodzieżowej subkultury*, PWN, Warszawa 2013, s. 211.

5 J. Dudała, *Fani-chuligani. Rzecz o polskich kibolach*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa 2004, s. 46.

6 S. Wanat, *Socjologia zachowań chuligańskich w sporcie*, Kultura Fizyczna nr 7-8/1992.

people who come to the stands. Not contracted footballers or activists who need to be controlled”<sup>7</sup>.

Radosław Kowalski classifies ‘scarfmen’ into seven personal types: 'animals', 'hooligan', 'official hooligans', 'ultras', 'scarf', 'fan', "fanatic". According to him, the last three types of 'scarfmen' are supporters differing in: the level of knowledge on topics related to a given sport discipline, club, sport in general, the way they display their sympathies (scarfs with club colors, flags, face painting, etc.) and the degree of attachment to sport. Of all three types, only the 'scarfman' participates, although sporadically, in fights and most often to defend itself. Of the first four mentioned, Kowalski considers 'animals' and 'hooligans' as the most aggressive. "As the author emphasizes - they are characterized by pessimism and fear of the future. Leaders of all these groups can perfectly use the internal need for group identification. Loudly say that the most important character trait is loyalty. The leaders are usually the people - apart from personality predispositions - the elderly, with charisma, with the greatest experience of being at away matches. They are often people with a stable professional and / or family situation, and commanding a group of 'hooligans' allows for demonstration of power, self-fulfillment as a leader. To a large extent, they do not directly participate in fights, but they know the law very well, they know how to act so that people from their managed group can avoid being punished for breaking the law.

For ‘scarfmen’, the most important thing is respect for club colors and coats of arms. And against this background conflicts are born. The demonstration of these symbols is the result of an attitude towards the "beloved club", and often a friend or hostile club. The sports level and the place occupied by a given club in the league very often does not have anything in common with the most aggressive hooligans. One can find out about fights in the local press, but the greatest "recognition" is enjoyed by pseudo supporters whose hooligan activity is shown in nationwide television programs.

Groups of ordinary supporters- fans and scarfmen are often mistakenly identified. Fans are people associated with the club, fascinated with football - they often have pre-match and after-match discussions among their friends, study tables and statistics, celebrate victories or discuss defeats and - most importantly - are far from actions characterized by a large dose of aggression. This group of people - "supporters" - significantly differs from the subculture of scarfmen, which is often hermetically sealed. J. Dudka differentiates these two groups by

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<sup>7</sup> R. Zieliński, *Liga chuliganów*, Croma, Wrocław 1996, s.73.

writing: "Today's fan is a person who is interested in sport, reads the sports press and follows broadcasts from sports competitions broadcast on radio and television. On the other hand hooligans is a person for whom matches are an excuse to make brawl<sup>8</sup>.

### **The principle of fair play is an important educational element**

Professional sport plays a significant role in human life - it allows them to meet their physical, psychological and social needs, and also improves the quality of life. Participation in sport leads to individual development and strengthening of group ties. Unfortunately, there is a risk associated with professional sport, which is increasingly losing its noble character and intentions, because on the one hand it is a contribution to the escalation of undesirable phenomena. On the other hand, it is an educational tool that allows counteracting social pathologies, especially among children and adolescents. The Commission of the European Communities has developed a document called White Paper, in which we read, among other things, that "sport also faces new threats and challenges that have arisen in European society, such as commercial pressure, the use of young athletes, doping, racism, violence, corruption and money laundering<sup>9</sup>" Sport is presented in this document as an entertainment and educational tool necessary for socialization and maintaining health. That is why exchange of experience between the countries of the Community in order to establish common safety standards and the role of sport, becomes so important<sup>10</sup>.

Also, the European Commission, emphasizing the role of education in the process of preparing for life in a united Europe and building tolerance towards other cultures and challenges, emphasized the important role of sport. "Tolerance is born thanks to knowledge and understanding, and everything starts at a young age, at home, at school, on playgrounds, in sports clubs"<sup>11</sup>.

Everyone, especially young people, who are in a developmental period, which is characterized by a deficit of belief and attitude stability, instinctively seeks support and acceptance in all life experiences. He can find them in his family, among his peers, at teachers in school or among other people in various educational environments in which

8 J. Dudała, *Fani-chuligani. Rzecz o polskich kibolach*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Źak, Warszawa 2004, s.65.

9 Biała Księga, Komisja Wspólnot Europejskich, COM (2007) 391 wersja ostateczna, Bruksela 2007, s. 3.

10 Deklaracja nr 29 w sprawie sportu, załączona do Traktatu Amsterdamskiego – COM (1999) 0644, Deklaracja z Rady Europejskiej w Nicei – 7-9 XII 2000, program pn. Europejski Rok Edukacji przez Sport – COM (2005) 0680 (Rezolucja Parlamentu Europejskiego, 2007/2086: 1).

11 Deklaracja Rady Europy w sprawie sportu, tolerancji i fair play, Amsterdam, 11 IV 1996.

moral content, sensitizing him to values, will be conveyed. Fair play, especially promoted by Olympic organizations, is such an example of values (understood not only by young people).

Currently, the Olympic Games have become an indispensable element of the culture of the modern world, part of sport and mass culture. The Olympic idea, however, is not just about promoting sport, it is already a culture in itself<sup>12</sup>.

Contemporary Olympic sport can promote special moral values by cultivating the principle of fair play. It is a determinant of life philosophy, the norm to be achieved despite all difficulties. Conducting fair play rules can be defined as participating in fair competition. Following the rules of the game means wanting to achieve real, 'unadulterated' victories. This demonstrates the universal nature of the fair play principle. In both the past and now, fair play is paramount in sporting competition. As Zofia Żukowska notes, fair play is considered the highest value of sport, without which sport loses its meaning. It is a common value for people of different races, religions, cultures, political systems and nationalities. It is an idea that has been widely accepted and has a universal character<sup>13</sup>.

In fair play behaviour it is not only important to follow the rules, but also who, in what circumstances and how behaves. This gives the fair play attitude a humanistic dimension, important in the education of young people, including football fans.

## Conclusions

Due to universal educational values, the principle of fair play should be present in all forms of sport and in every age category. In the sport of children and youth, fair play can have important educational functions - provided that young people understand its meaning and associate it with the rules of the game, in every sport competition. It can be transferred from sport to behavior in everyday life. Fair play is becoming an educational idea whose value is to offer a high ethical culture, regardless of the addressee. Recognizing this, the

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12 Kowalska J., *Kibicowanie jako nośnik uniwersalnych wartości w kulturze masowej na przykładzie Łodzi*, [w:] Z. Dziubiński, M. Lenartowicz (red.), *Kultura fizyczna a kultura masowa*, Salos, Warszawa 2011, s. 335-336.

13 Z. Żukowska, *Fair Play. Sport. Edukacja*, Estrella, Warszawa 1996.

Fair Play Committee developed the Declaration of the International Fair Play Committee "Sport and Fair Play in the 21st Century". And so in point 1 we read: "We cannot understand Fair Play differently than in connection with such moral values as justice, honesty and human dignity. The broad vision makes Fair Play widely available and is the foundation for all its specific applications"<sup>14</sup>.

On the other hand, Jerzy Kosiewicz is of a completely different opinion, who indicates that moral norms related to the principle of fair play are completely foreign to the properties of sport and its regulations in individual disciplines. "The principle of fair play - that is, its application - is also not the basis, determinant or test of individual or collective integrity or a testimony to active goodness in sport. It is neither an ethical phenomenon, nor a standard or morality tester"<sup>15</sup>. The author even questions the sense and need of sport ethics, believing that sport should be an amoral phenomenon<sup>16</sup>.

It is difficult to agree with this opinion, as it should be noted that compliance as a value still has a broad social and civic dimension. As Józef Lipiec says: "Fair play is a civilizationally sophisticated, but clearly defined form of invitation to the world of joy"<sup>17</sup> – may this invitation be used with dignity, without losing its universal values in the world of mass culture, including physical culture and supporting.

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14 Deklaracja Międzynarodowego Komitetu Fair play „Sport i Fair play w XXI wieku”, [w:] Z.R. Żukowscy (red.), *Fair Play w sporcie i Olimpiźmie. Szansa czy utopia*, Estrella, Warszawa 2010, s.13.

15 J. Kosiewicz, *Sport poza dobrem i złem moralnym*, [w:] *Kultura fizyczna a globalizacja*, Z. Dziubiński, P. Rymarczyk (red.), Salos, Warszawa 2010, s. 38.

16 J. Kosiewicz, *Sport ...op. cit.*, s. 32-33.

17 J. Lipiec, Aksjologiczne podstawy idei fair play, W: Z.R. Żukowscy (red.), *Fair Play w sporcie i Olimpiźmie. Szansa czy utopia*, Estrella, Warszawa 2010, s.43.

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