

# THE VALUES AND EXCESSES OF MODERN SPORT- COMPARISON WITH ITS ORIGINS

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Governance, Agency, Regulation, Assessment, IOC, IFs, World Sport, Gymnasium, Modern Olympism, Roman sports, Greek sports

## Research question

The world of sport and its organisations has become a complex system due to the multiplicity of the elements which compose it. Today, two different worlds coexist – « professional sport » and « amateur sport ». The distinction between the two different sporting worlds can sometimes collide when ethic and cheating are common approaches to winning.

In order to understand behaviours such as doping, fixing, corruption, trafficking, foul play which plague modern sport, it is significant to compare Ancient Greek sport with Roman sport.

Therefore, the objective of this communication is to draw a comparison between the origins of sport pertaining to its objectives, ethics, practice ...) and modern sport.

## Theoretical background

The origins of modern sport date back to Ancient Greece (Collectif d'archéologues grecs, 1976), and to the Roman empire. The concept of Greek sport was based on the "gymnasium" where the focal place was a stadium. The foundations of this concept were based on education through sport. The Greek military elite trained according to this concept (Chappelet 1996) and thereafter, the elites throughout the country trained likewise. Education was based on ethic including respect for the opponent (Zedda law, 1988).

Pierre de Coubertin used this concept to create "Modern Olympism" as exemplified in the Olympic Charter. The Romans included the principle of playing and winning almost at all costs and added the right to life and death on losers. As a result, at the end of each event, the Roman Emperor raised his thumb to show that the loser's life was spared or lowered his thumb as a sign of death. One can draw similarities between the excesses of modern sport and the former vision of Roman sport.

## Methodology, research design and data analysis

Our analysis was conducted in four steps:

- A research study of literature;
- A comparative study between modern sports and its excesses (analysis of Baron Pierre de Coubertin's vision of modern Olympism and professional sport) as compared to Ancient Greece:

- An analysis based on articles and books on the history of sport as well as on interviews of some IFs to confirm findings and studies on modern sport.
- A general report including a comparison between modern sport ("professional sport and "amateur"/Olympic sport) in relation to the Greek and Roman concepts of sport.

## Results, discussion and implication, conclusions

Today, the world of sport has developed in two directions following its historical evolution into two different concepts, one Greek and one Roman: the world of professional sport such as American football based on the Roman concept is an environment where almost everything is allowed (There is almost no anti-doping control, money is the focus of interest, sport is viewed as a spectacle and betting is allowed), whereas the world of « amateur sport », de Coubertin's vision concur with the Greek concept focussing on ethic hence the anti-doping controls undertaken by an independent body, WADA; the rules from the Olympic Charter regulating the Olympic system, money redistribution, betting etc.

However, there is a flaw in the so called world of « amateur » sport. The federations of sports like football, basketball, ice hockey, tennis, track and field, etc. are outside the law although, in principle, they should respect the rules of good governance in the Olympic movement. The concept of « amateur » sport is not respected as big money is generated by sponsors, television rights and betting. Moreover, the laws on labour, on the free movement of workers, the national laws on doping and the WADA laws make it even more complicated to control the governance of the sporting system, let alone its controls and ethical foundations.

The so called « Professional sports » such as American football, Mixed Martial Arts do not take anti-doping control into account. Money is part of the game and has some Roman significance including the dimension of spectacle. An interesting perspective would be to categorise « amateur sports » in the Greek sense as « sports without any control ». Former IOC President J.A. Samaranch suggested so. Yet, the sports falling into this category would no longer be Olympic sports.

To conclude, the two past different worlds namely "professional sport" and "amateur sport" have very significant similarities since both resort to illegal measures such as doping, cheating in order to meet their sporting objectives.

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