

Fair Play in the Perspective of Contemporary Sport

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Sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon of modern times is often portrayed as a renaissance of the Olympic ideals. Today, however, we can see that sports in many cases contributes to the emancipation process, particularly in developing countries, offers opportunities for strengthening national identity and fosters respect for state symbols. A wider context of applying the *principle of fair play in sports* has its indisputable philosophical and ethical dimensions. The first expresses the widening gap between high performance sports and recreational sports. The importance of schools in the value modeling of the principle of fair play in general and at the level of sports is given by the fact that their very nature is aimed at socialization and education. Olympic Movement must ensure that the Olympic Games preserve both the Olympic values and the principles of protecting the environment, respond to the needs of the young generation of athletes and enhance gender equality and equal opportunities.

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The nature of contemporary sports

Sport, an ever more frequent expression in our everyday life and in specialized literature, reflects not only a unique physical activity and a game situation, but it is also an important social phenomenon. Sport is one of the most discussed phenomena of the new millennium. Its importance is now amplified by its indisputable impact on the social, economic and cultural environment. It embodies the amazing values such as a joy of movement, performance, health and beauty. Equally, however, it also reflects a number of new critical problems, which the world today has no choice but to face with worry.

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Unbridled commercialization, consumer sedentary lifestyle, drug scene, corruption, racism, violence in the stadiums – all this also reflects the world of sports in an extent that corresponds with its virtual attractiveness and media effectiveness. Sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon of modern times is often portrayed as a *renaissance of the Olympic ideals*. In the time of worsening conflicts and international disputes, a peaceful sporting competition at an international level in accordance with the fundamental Olympic idea is regarded as the preserve of reconciliation and mutual understanding. It is also an impulse for a conflict resolution and an appropriate basis for intercultural cooperation. The last decades have brought an increased emphasis on the principle of equal opportunities to the global sports arena. It has been largely successful as far as the rights of people of all colours are concerned, but in the area of equal opportunities for women the situation is still rather complicated and confusing. Today, however, we can see that sports in many cases contributes to the emancipation process, particularly in developing countries, offers opportunities for strengthening national identity and fosters respect for state symbols. At the individual level the platform for building personal careers and prestige is also important. Sports, either directly or indirectly, helps building a functional global society operating in accordance with the principle of ‘unity in diversity’.

To a similar extent, this also applies to class, ethnic or racial logics in sports, where it is believed, especially in our current social and educational practice, that active sport can be an effective *educational tool* for shaping positive character traits; despite of the fact that sport is linked with the dominant culture and ideological system via various, often contradictory, relationships and dependencies. The power of the global perspective of extremely varied cultural environment is so influential that we can hardly generalize sources, manifestations and consequences of the functioning of sports in society.

At the political level, sport often creates associations with a feeling of national selfawareness and national identity, in many countries sports successes are used and abused to increase the prestige in global politics. Sport plays a vital role in education, as it has become an integral part of school life for hundreds of millions of students in the contemporary world; both in the physical education classes and at school and college competitions, championships and races.

In the context of the nature of our cultural sphere, sports in terms of socialization effects manifests itself in connection with the prospects of developing the principles of fair play particularly in the following:

– in the opportunity to examine and develop individual talents and identities even in other areas;

- in the access to experience outside the dressing room and the pitch;
- in the formation of new relationships, including outside the sphere of sports;
- in learning how experience in sports can be of practical use in other areas of life;
- in the opportunity to treat an individual as a complex personality and not as an unilaterally developed athlete;
- in the chance to be competent, responsible and respected even beyond the narrow framework of sports (Coakley, 2001, p. 92–93).

High performance sports is based on the principle of sports ethics, it is built on the idea that mastery in sports is the result of a systematic commitment to sports training, willingness to sacrifice and renunciation of normal standards of personal life. In contrast, the aim of recreational sports is the activity itself. It is a combination of physical activity and the environment, a path to personal experience, to improving physical fitness and mental well-being, where the opponent is not an enemy, but a welcome means of testing sports skills. (Coakley, 2001, p. 94–95).

A wider context of applying the *principle of fair play in sports* has its indisputable philosophical and ethical dimensions. The first expresses the widening gap between high performance sports and recreational sports: Sport is being globalized as a unique form of spectator mass culture, but at the same time it is losing its constant mass base of those who sport regularly. Such a social climate allows the creation of elitarian and preferential individualism of sports stars, contributes to the weakening of moral authorities and in the effort to achieve fantastic sports results and records encourages deployment of unfair methods of competing (Oborný, 2001, p. 18–19).

Negative trends in sports and their impact on the moral level of society are focused on particularly in *sports ethics*. It points out the already discussed fact that the present is tainted by the pursuit of quantitatively understood performances, where 'the ethical dimension of the athlete has been dismissed as something that cannot be measured' (Hogenová, 1997, p. 105). The current ideal of quality performance and productivity throws a new light on the validity and importance of the principle of fair play. Honest conduct, behaving in accordance with the principles of good sportsmanship, is in high performance sports sometimes considered a weakness, an unnecessary obstacle to success.

The Olympic spirit that pervades sports ethics is somewhat forgotten, despite the fact that it goes beyond respecting the rules as such, as it also involves the concept of friendship, it recognizes the uniqueness of the other person

and first and foremost it epitomises the meaning of the spirit of sports in the broadest possible sense.

You will surely agree that the extent and the nature of respect for the principles of fair play are shaped primarily at a young age. However, we find ourselves in a situation where *sports of youth* is characterized by privatization coupled with the growth of commercial and private organizations and the dwindling importance of financing sports and physical activities from public sources. It is especially young people at all levels who are motivated to constantly achieve better results (ethics of performance) and a growing number of programmes targeted at performance-oriented training facilities leads to a rise in elitarianism of highly specialized athletes. On the other hand, there is also an opposite positive phenomenon, which is the mass character and the growing popularity of alternative sports, developing unorganized physical/sports activities operated with regard to the possibilities and limits of physical, economic and spatio-temporal conditions.

Generally speaking, we must not forget that the principle of fair play is also being threatened in situations where players, athletes and coaches practise formally legal but ethically dubious tactics – such as verbal abuse and perturbing the opponent, misrepresenting own skills in order to confuse the opponent and gain thus a tactical advantage over them. Such practice of boastful intimidation of the opponent does not explicitly violate any rules, but is generally considered unethical.

There are other practices which are used and abused in sports ethics. This, as a concept denoting a characteristic feature of the contemporary transformations of high performance sports, is seen as a stubborn attempt of athletes and their teams to achieve a maximum performance, victories, records and rewards. And even at the cost of extreme self-sacrifice, pain, injury or loss of respect for the impassable principle of fair play. At the top level of some sports we can thus increasingly see situations (level playing field), in which adapting to set parameters of maximum performance and victory strongly encourages the athlete to bypass the principles of fair play (e.g. the doping scandals in Tour de France, corruption in football). This creates a new level of fair play where equal access to sports competitions 'guarantees' an equal share of unfair methods. In an extreme case, e.g. legalization of doping as a sign of equality at the 'starting line' may be eventually considered 'fair'. And those athletes who, either for moral or health reasons, refuse doping, find themselves in a disadvantageous competitive situation for which they are 'responsible themselves'.

In a discussion about fair play in sports it is certainly worth mentioning the newly constructed *hubris* category – the tendency of some elite athletes to attract attention of the public at all costs and create thus an image of exquisiteness

at the cost of a gradual loss of touch with real everyday life and socialization difficulties associated with the termination of the sporting career.

Physical education in schools and fair play issues

The matter of fair play in our cultural environment is almost unimaginable without physical education in schools. To a fuller analysis of school physical education contributes also the level and practical use of the teachers of physical education in our country. It turns out that many a graduate of sports faculties perceives his/her studies as a pragmatic option in connection with a possibly wider use of a university degree, e.g. the somewhat still unclearly defined post of a “manager”. This is certainly not a good starting point for improving both the level of physical education in schools and the wider perspective of the principle of fair play in sports in our society.

The importance of schools in the value modelling of the principle of fair play in general and at the level of sports is given by the fact that their very nature is aimed at socialization, education and at the quintessential transmission of good social values, norms, customs and traditions. It is this profession that significantly ensures the social portability of knowledge, education and culture. It invariably participates in the maintenance and development of human skills and professional expertise. The given cultural framework for the very essence of continuity gives into the hands of teachers the task of continuity of education and thus determines the degree of its social prestige and social credit. The prestige of teachers, however, is primarily based on their indispensable role in the field of education. It should be noted that besides cultural influence, it is also educational processes which are involved in the nature and continuity of the development of values in society and in its level of stabilization. The overall social climate of respect for law and honesty is thus a vital condition for instilling the principle of fair play both in schools and in the particular sports environment.

Another interesting revelation is the nature of the atmosphere in the *teaching unit of physical education*. Its unique specifics and the diametric differences from the atmosphere in other school subjects bring along also certain signs of indiscipline and indolence in the teacher's verbal expression; there is a more frequent use of slang and colloquial expressions, incorrect word order, a higher occurrence of subjectless sentences, a greater use of informal word endings and interjections. Teachers therefore speak differently *in the classroom* whilst teaching theoretical and doctrinal subjects than when they are *in the gym*. The verbal expression of most PE teachers thus rarely has the expected quality.

For this reason the introduction of rhetoric in the curriculum of future physical education teachers has been recently suggested. Moreover, there is an increasing interest in rhetoric in all spheres of social life (Karásková, Robotová, 2001 p. 138). Doping, like a twisted mirror of the value approach to the principle of fair play in sports, is regarded in specialized literature as a permanent phenomenon of the current sports scene. Yet differences within individual countries are accepted. We can thus perceive a prevailing sceptical view on the possibility of doping eradication. In this context we are often reminded of the overall spirit of contemporary postmodern pluralism, which is marked by exuberance, diversity and tolerance replacing the traditional values of freedom, equality and fraternity. The practical philosophy of life, full of distaste for universal and generally applicable and accepted values, is commonly acknowledged; although with a feeling of bitterness. We can thus often see a superiority of faith over reason, growing narcissism, expedient behaviour, questioning of the value of tradition and the anchorage of values.

It is expedience that very often becomes a strong motive for achieving an exceptional performance or the adoration of the cult of physical beauty (not the spirit) and even at the cost of doping. The overall permissiveness in the contemporary social climate in our cultural sphere encourages the growth of the drug scene and of doping as a specific problem of the relationship of sports and society at the turn of the millennium.

The contemporary education system is open to new pedagogical methods, especially to universally formulated, socially and morally appealing value-oriented messages. Physical education is thus not 'only' aimed at promoting physical fitness, but plays a vital role in communicating the message of Olympism as a cultural model contributing to the creation of moral attitudes, respect for life and human beings, respect for human dignity.

The educational and social aspects of Olympic education are particularly amplified within the environment of the Olympic Games as such, when the increased interest in the Olympic competitions might serve as a method (e.g. in Canada during the preparations for the Winter Olympic Games in Calgary) of increasing the interest in sports and leisure outdoor activities and a way of updating life values as such (Zukowski, 2002). The Olympic education emphasizing the principle of fair play is based on the principles of a gentlemanly respect for the generally accepted rules, the opponent and the preservation of equal opportunities. It rejects the principle of superiority, belittling the suffering of the opponent, undeserved practical advantages, intentionally erroneous interpretation of the rules. It encourages a friendly team atmosphere and puts an emphasis on cooperation (Krawczyk, 1998). But there is no doubt that the principle of fair

play is useful in general, in the broadest possible social meaning – in politics, law and economy alike; everywhere where there are laws and moral standards consistently applied; where the law has the upper hand and corruption, protectionism and nepotism are at the very bottom of social values.

High Performance Sports vs. Fair Play – what to do next?

A large number of problems connected with respecting the principle of fair approach to sports contests occur mainly in *high performance youth sports*. Out of many recommendations addressing this particular issue, it was the sociologist Peter Donnelly who nearly 20 years ago outlined the basic trends of potential changes which should primarily depend on:

- prior changes in the overall philosophy of high performance sports, in its mode of operation, rules and tendencies, which should be clearly focused on the rights and interests of children and youth;
- creating a more natural, less institutionally controlled environment that would promote the universality of individual development, growth and maturity (Donnelly, 1993, pp. 95–126).

We are witnessing dynamic changes in the incentive structure of all the people “around sports.” Athletes are often not motivated by their performance, but by the reward for performance or victory. Coaches are not always sufficiently appreciated for the mastery of their charges, but for the number of victories achieved or the score; and in accordance with this principle they are also dismissed. The owners of sports clubs may not be motivated by their love for sports, but ‘only’ for purely commercial reasons. But for most athletes and sports devotees the value of sports lies in sports itself, a value which is unique in the truest possible sense, when the joy of movement, the blissful feeling of tiredness, healthy competition and the joy of spectators after a victory is an exceptional counterweight to the greyness of everyday life. Sport has always been and certainly always will be a positive phenomenon expanding the horizons of our lives; despite of the fact that sports in its simplistic and commercialised form as portrayed by the media greatly distorts its versatile nature.

At the turn of the twentieth century no-one could predict the extent to which sports would have become a national and in some respects even a global obsession by the end of the century. Despite some ‘romantic views’ it is evident that sport is globally a great deal more popular and is highly regarded as an economic sector of a huge money merry-go-round, sky-high careers and admiration. Never before in history have people devoted so much time to watching sports events and never before have they been exposed to such massive mar-

keting and advertising activities as in the realm of sports consumerism. Never before have people bought so much sportswear and sports equipment; we have never witnessed such loyalty of fans and media interest in sports as we do today.

There are no serious reasons on the horizon of future development of sport why this situation should change in this regard; as far as both demand and offer are concerned. In some regions of the contemporary world this demand gives great opportunities for growth in the context of socially conditioned changes in values, lifestyles, forms of leisure activities, standard of living. And as far as the offer goes, there are no requirements for sports experiences covered by the media that the sports industry would not able to meet.

At the beginning of the new millennium it thus seems that sports as a social phenomenon, in accordance with the basic characteristics of the world, which it is part of, will bring even a greater use of sophisticated technology, greater concentration of funding and stronger links to media technology than in the twentieth century.

The nature of contemporary sports, in particular at its high performance, Olympic level, is significantly and increasingly affected by the globally set promotion in the media. Sports is thus becoming one of the strongest global idioms understood in the broader context of cultural, political, social and ethnic pluralism; especially because the influence of the media increases proportionally to the dramatic development of the division of labour and the rise of mediated information. We are witnessing a dynamic development in the global sports media network with a number of specialized sports channels and programmes; sports in the media is an extremely attractive spectacle and live broadcasts from the Olympic Games or World Championships are followed by billions of viewers in more than two hundred countries on all continents. It is therefore not at all surprising that it is sports events that dominate the twenty most-watched shows in the history of television (Maguire et al., 2002, p. 50).

The media select, translate and interpret sports events to attract and retain the attention of the viewer. The related interdependence of sports organizations, media companies and marketing agencies is undoubtedly a life-giving source of the existence of commercial spectator sport (Sekot, 2006, pp. 199–212). This undoubtedly greatly assists the development and dissemination of sports, its popularity and awareness about its less known branches, brings numerous experiences of all kinds. However, they do not always portray athletes as role models that are worth following; but trying to attract the attention of viewers and advertising agencies at all costs, they often do so by mudslinging, denouncing and condemning in particular the negative aspects of high performance sports,

which usually just reflect the persistent efforts of athletes and coaches to avoid failure or the inability of athletes to cope with the demands (and dangers) of their sporting careers.

Doping, violation of rules, corruption or a personal failure of a sports star is thus an irresistible topic for the media. However, we may often have a simplistic impression that in sports it is possible and even desirable to cheat; that the principle of fair play is not in fact an insurmountable code underlying the very essence of sports, but just an appealing ethical label.

For the media (and the consumers of mass media) the scene of the 'cult of stars' is also irresistible, especially when certain stories from their personal lives are publicised as a consistently rewarding topic providing 'media consumption' (Dovalil, 2008, p. 5–8). In terms of the value of sports activities in the context of the defence of the unique mission of the principle of fair play, it is necessary to carefully consider the implications of the fact that dramatic changes in sports on the background of the growing importance of the media, professionalization, commercialization and sponsorship provide the world of sports and its star representatives with a growing social and cultural status.

This is, however, associated with the value and ethical message communicated to the society, becoming thus one of the most important aspects of the socio-cultural nature of sports. Fame, including fame in sports, is now taking shape in real time in terms of the visible and often speedy generation of celebrities, while in the past reputation and fame meant true greatness, importance and a strong positive value message that stood the test of time. Glory can be fabricated or generated (in sports undoubtedly on the basis of performance), celebrities can be produced, but it is impossible to artificially create a value type of heroes. Even for the world of sports the principle of fair play is invariably generated mainly by heroic bearers of positive unique deeds that are worth following, whereas sports stars evoke just a 'big name'. We must not therefore forget that the cultivation of the principle of fair play in sports is also connected with sports heroism, unlike in the case of celebrities that get seared into our memory as part of the value of the message of sports (Sekot, 2008, p. 174–177).

The Olympic Movement – the ideological and organizational basis of the principle of fair play in sports

Foreseeing the future development of sports means also exploring the possibilities and limitations of the future development of Olympism. The principled opinions of experts in terms of trends could be generalized to the following statements:

- Olympic Games as an expression of modern culture will be eternal;
- Globalization of Olympism and the Olympic Movement will lead to disadvantaging sports in developing countries;
- Rapid development of new non-traditional sports will attract a growing number of young people and increase the pressure on including these sports disciplines in the programme of the Olympic Games;
- It will be necessary to manage and coordinate the number of regional, international and world sporting events globally;
- Model countries of the harmonization of sports for all and high performance sports will be states such as Norway, Finland, Germany, Australia and Canada;
- This will strengthen the role of National Olympic Committees (Dovalil et al., 2004, p. 185).

The current trend within the Olympic Movement was decided particularly at the XIII. Olympic Congress, at the 121st meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Copenhagen in October 2009. The main mission of this important gathering was the assessment of the current state of the Olympic Movement in the evolving global society and the assessment of the future of this movement in order to provide all its components and other interested parties with guidance, suggestions and recommendations for its promotion and harmonious development within the society as a whole. 1249 participants of the Congress were chaired by Jacques Rogge, the President of the International Olympic Committee. During the three-day gathering 453 discussion papers of members of the Olympic family and 1319 public submissions were presented. Ideas, suggestions and considerations contained in these contributions were recorded and taken into account. The following recommendations were made (XIIIe Congrès Olympique Copenhague, 2009):

Athletes are of central importance in the Olympic Movement. They are supported by the structures of local sports clubs, national and international sports federations and national Olympic committees. Athletes must be part of the authorities of the Olympic Movement, which should ensure that all athletes can compete on equal terms. The highest priority of the Olympic Movement is a fight against doping based on the principle of zero tolerance. Likewise, athletes and their representatives should actively contribute to giving no space to cheating in the Olympic sports, as well as to giving utmost importance to respecting the Olympic principle of fair play. An important priority for the entire Olympic Movement must be the specific needs of athletes with disabilities.

All the components of the Olympic Movement and other parties involved (including managers, agents and sponsors) should be taken into account, in

accordance with the code of protection of the rights of athletes, the current trends of exceeding the training schedules, competition programmes and sporting events calendars, which can harm athletes, particularly the young ones, in terms of their performance, health and vigour.

The imperative of programmes of professional development of athletes in the sense of 'dual career' should be also fully respected. It has been also recommended that a committee of the IOC, which would be in charge of issues related to coaches, trainers and realization teams of athletes, should be established.

User-friendly and accessible communication channels enabling all athletes and sports organizations to circulate and share information are seen as a new growing priority. The Olympic Movement reaffirms its strong opposition to the purpose-built nationality change of athletes (e.g. trading with citizenship and passports), as this represents an abuse of the spirit of competitiveness which is inherent in the world of sports.

The Olympic Games are widely recognized as a unique and a world-class event that guarantees all participants and spectators a wealth of unforgettable experiences. Nevertheless, it is essential that the IOC keeps making an unceasing effort to maintain their position of an exquisite event. This will ensure maximum adoption and enforcement of fundamental principles and values of Olympism, which are epitomised by the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games must be based on the principle of universality, which includes not only access to competitions, sports infrastructure and the organization of top sporting events, but also open access to sports for all peoples and all cultures, from a local level up to the Olympic level, to all benefits and opportunities that sport provides.

The whole work of the Olympic Movement should be inspired by this principle. The Olympic Movement must ensure that the Olympic Games preserve both the Olympic values and the principles of protecting the environment, respond to the needs of the young generation of athletes and enhance gender equality and equal opportunities.

From the point of view of the structure of the Olympic Games, it is necessary to conduct further research to understand how the various sports disciplines in the Olympic programme contribute to the overall value of the Games, including assessing the level of the attractiveness of the Games in the dynamic global marketplace. The IOC should consider creating a set of minimum requirements for cities applying to host the Games, which would have to be met before the particular city could even be considered for candidacy.

The structure of the Olympic Movement must clearly reflect the commitment to implement policies that promote understanding and sharing the universal nature of sports. The Olympic Movement will be able to get closer to its ultimate goal of creating a healthier society characterized by greater equality and greater tolerance, free of prejudice and division, undefiled by discrimination and injustice. Appropriate institutionalized forms of a mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership between governments and the Olympic Movement should be developed in the following areas: development and promotion of participation in sports for all, organising sports events for young people around the world, protecting the health of young people and athletes, fight against doping and supporting athletes at the end of their sporting career, when they are beginning a 'new' life outside the sports world. Being aware and recognizing the fact that the Olympic symbolism is the property of the IOC, the Olympic Movement should always contribute to the protection of the Olympic symbols and emblems. The Olympic Movement should adopt appropriate measures to promote closer links between sports, culture and education throughout the Olympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games by supporting and encouraging activities such as the International Olympic Academy national Olympic Academies, Olympic museums or the network of Olympic museum.

Olympism and youth create a connection reflecting the need to broaden the dissemination of the idea of the irreplaceable role of sports in human life and society by increasing its influence on young people around the world using sports as a catalyst for their education and personal development. To ensure greater participation in physical activities and sports and for the sake of promoting a healthy lifestyle, governments should be encouraged to cooperate more closely with sports bodies and young people in such a way so that sports occupies an important place in schools at all levels and for all age groups. The Youth Olympic Games represent in the history of the modern Olympic Movement a unique opportunity to globally raise the bar in terms of implementation of educational and sports programmes for all young people and determining future steps of the IOC and the Olympic Movement concerning educational and sports programmes for youth.

Value orientation of contemporary sports

A sociological value-motivated interest in sports is largely stimulated by the growing gap between recreational sporting activities on the one hand and the dynamics of high performance professional sports on the other. The inconsistent development of sports thus creates the following sources of tension:

1. Often irreconcilable interests between elite and club sports in mentoring, funding, value orientation, building relevant infrastructure or creating a calendar of sporting events.

2. The difference between the highly individualized needs and goals of elite athletes ending up in isolation and the collective needs and objectives of the wider membership, that is, a conflict between the extremely utilitarian understanding of sports and the perception of sports as a socially highly rated vital need.

3. The tension between the rationally bureaucratic model of professional sports supporting modernization and change and the voluntaristic emphasis on continuity, stability and continuity of a club.

4. The resistance of regions, territories and states emphasizing a broad membership base against centralization efforts of a select few at high performance representation levels (Green, Houlihan, 2005, p. 169–170).

The fundamental decree of the status of sports in our cultural sphere is the ‘Amsterdam Declaration’. There is also the European Conference of ministers responsible for sports and the Executive Committee of the European Council for sports. Pan-European cooperation in the field of sports thus under close supervision develops the following topics: Support of all sports as a means of improving the quality of life, facilitating social integration and strengthening social cohesion particularly among young people or fostering tolerance through sports and protection of sports against the problems it is currently facing. It emphasises the continuous importance of events and values such as youth education via sports, the Olympic solidarity programmes, the economic importance of sports, anti-doping measures, promotion of ethical, safe and healthy sports.

Similarly, the *Eurofit* programme is focused on speed, endurance, strength and locomotory skills of school children and adults and strives to reduce or at least partially eliminate doping in sports at all levels by reducing the illicit trade of performance enhancing drugs, to increase the efficiency of anti-doping tests, to support educational programmes and ensure the effectiveness of penalties for doping. In addition, it is currently looking into the possibilities of prevention of violence at sports stadiums and is focusing on the recovery of the practical effects of the ‘triad’ sports, tolerance and fair play.

Emphasis on the mass character of sports as a lifetime leisure fitness activity is considered to be the most socially important part of the future development of sports, which should in the first place promote the principle of universality of a healthy personality growth as one of the prerequisites for a harmonious development of society.

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