

5 Violence in Sport: Ethically Acceptable Boundaries

Learning Outcomes

After reading Chapter 5, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the relationship between societal and sport violence.
2. Differentiate between in-game violence and peripheral violence.
3. Provide examples of violence inherent in sport.
4. Compare arguments for and against using sport as a catharsis to reduce violence that takes place in non-sport environments.
5. Describe ways that athletes, coaches, and administrators can break the cycle of violence in sport.
6. Explain how the glorification of winning can encourage violence in sport.
7. Identify some examples of and contributing factors to spectator violence.
8. Describe ways that player/spectator violence can be reduced.

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Violence is a visible part of today's sport scene. Whether because of increasing violent incidents in and surrounding sports, increasing attention from the media when violent acts occur, or a combination of both, violence is more prevalent in sport today than in years past. Undeniably, the use of violent tactics, fights among athletes and between athletes and spectators, post-game riots, and hazing incidents make headlines with increasing regularity. Given the prevalence of increasingly aggressive behavior and outright violence in sport, and the concern that sport-related violence might extend beyond the playing field, the question arises as to just what are ethically acceptable boundaries regarding sport and violence. Is all violence and aggression related to sport unethical? Is it ever ethical? Or should we apply moral reasoning on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not particular acts of sport-related violence are ethical or unethical? What can we do, participant and spectator alike, to combat violent and aggressive behavior in sport? And can reduced violence in sport lead to reduced violence in society in general?

This chapter seeks to answer those questions in a moral context. We will examine sport-related violence, the factors that influence it, and the ways in which sport participants and spectators can apply moral reasoning to incidents of sport violence. Readers will thus become acquainted with the different kinds of violence that occur within and around sports and learn ways to eradicate it based on the application of moral analysis.

Societal Violence

Violence has always been part of human nature. We see it all around us, in our homes, our schools, our communities, from historical times to the present. Modern society is bombarded daily with violent images, through war coverage in the media, shootings on campuses, shoot-outs with the police, and movies and videogames that seem to glorify violence and murder. And we see acts of **aggression** and violence increasingly in sports. Competitive sport understandably involves a certain amount of aggressive play, but acts of true violence cross a line that should never be crossed. Sadly, it is a line being crossed with distressing frequency. Some athletes employ violent tactics as a way to injure or intimidate an opponent, and there are some coaches who use violence as part of their overall strategy for defeating an opposing team. Spectators unwittingly demonstrate their support of violent behavior when they cheer as a brawl breaks out on the field between players. But just what is sports violence, and are some sports inherently violent?

aggression: behavior intended to cause psychological or physical pain or harm.

competitive objectives of sport: goals within competitive sport that are formally established and known by all; for example, gaining yardage, tackling, and scoring are three competitive objectives in the game of football; teams that are the most effective in attaining the competitive goals of sport usually achieve victory.

In-Game Violence

Terry and Jackson define sports violence as “behavior which causes harm, occurs outside of the rules of the sport, and is unrelated to the **competitive objectives of sport**.”^{1(p2)} Coakley defines it as “the use of excessive physical force, which causes or has the potential to cause harm or destruction.”^{2(p202)} A tragic example of Terry and Jackson's

definition of sports violence occurred during team practice for the Oakland Raiders of the National Football League (NFL). On August 24, 2003, linebacker Bill Romanowski punched 27-year-old teammate Marcus Williams in the face.

Romanowski's crushing blow broke Williams' eye socket, caused brain damage, and ended his NFL career.³ Romanowski's actions are the very definition of violence in sport: his behavior caused harm, occurred outside the rules of sport, and was unrelated to the objectives of his sport. Although you could argue that Romanowski intended to intimidate his competition by punching Williams in the face, his violent act did not provide him with a direct advantage to gaining yardage, tackling, or scoring—three competitive objectives of the sport of football.

Actions such as Romanowski's would find difficulty gaining support from the three moral reasoning models presented in Chapter 1. From a teleological perspective, it is difficult to find any values that support such behavior. It is unlikely that a deontologist would prefer that Romanowski's behavior be universalized as acceptable to all. And certainly, if applying consequentialism from a utilitarian viewpoint, the consequences of Romanowski injuring Williams did not result in a greater good.

in-game violence (sport violence): within sporting contests, unjust or unwarranted exertion of intense physical force, often resulting in injury.

As its name indicates, **in-game violence** is violence that occurs during the course of play, such as the use of violent tactics to harm opposing players or fights that break out between players. An example of in-game violence is one from the 2004 National Hockey League (NHL) season. In an act of retaliation for an incident that took place three weeks previously, the Vancouver Canucks' Todd Bertuzzi, at 6'3", 245 lbs., assaulted the smaller 6'1", 210 lb. Steve Moore of the Colorado Avalanche. Bertuzzi approached Moore from behind, grabbed his jersey with one hand, and punched him with the other, knocking Moore unconscious. Bertuzzi then shoved the unconscious Moore into the ice as he was falling. As a result of Bertuzzi's assault, Moore suffered a broken neck, spinal ligament injuries, a concussion, and facial cuts and bruises.⁴

From a deontological perspective, would those involved in the game of hockey be willing to universalize Bertuzzi's behavior? This scenario is interesting because from some perspectives, it was not necessarily Bertuzzi's *actions* that drew attention but the *result* of those actions. When examining Bertuzzi's act of retaliation against Moore, hockey players might support the act as part of an unwritten code in hockey that lets players 'police' dirty hits by fellow players by retaliating with even more vicious hits. Thus, Moore's injury aside, players might universally accept Bertuzzi's hit, especially had it been more face to face instead of an attack on Moore's blind side.

Many sports have inherently violent aspects. In football, for example, blocking and especially tackling are often done violently, sometimes to intimidate or 'send a message' to the ball carrier. One violent aspect of the game of hockey is the physical contact that comes from body checking, which is using the shoulder or hip to knock an opposing player against the ice or boards. Hockey's most extreme form of violence, however, is the actual fighting between players that for all intents and purposes is accepted as part of the game. Scrums in rugby include elements of violence also, and boxing is clearly violent in that it consists exclusively of punching an opponent in an attempt to earn victory by causing enough physical harm to knock the other person unconscious.



5-1 *A sport such as ultimate fighting is designed with elements of violence included.*

Few sports are more violent than ultimate fighting, however. In 1997, ultimate fighting was forced off television and eventually banned by most states because of its brutality. Ultimate fighting was brought back in 2001 largely because of the sport's rule changes that were supposed to soften the punching, stomping, kneeling, and elbowing so prevalent in the sport.⁵

Spectators and Violence in Sport

Society as a whole seems to have long embraced sports that are violent in nature or that have violent elements. Fans cheer after a violent hit in football, believe they have

received their money's worth when ultimate fighters beat their opponents into submission, and are ecstatic when a boxer knocks out an opponent. When discussing the morality of ultimate fighting using the utilitarian method of moral reasoning, we should attempt to determine the amount of happiness that the sport of ultimate fighting brings to not only those close to it but also members of society. If more people are happier with the sport than without it, support from a utilitarian perspective is evident. If, however, more people disagree and are unhappy with ultimate fighting because of its relatively high level of violence, a case could be made to ban the sport or to change its structure to decrease its more violent aspects.

Certainly, fan attendance is an indicator of the popularity and enjoyment of a particular sport. There were 20,455 spectators at the heavyweight boxing title bout between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali on March 8, 1971 at Madison Square Garden. Referred to as the "fight of the century," both boxers maintained a pace that was more like lightweights.⁶ Frazier attacked with sweeping left hooks while Ali flashed jabs followed by left-right combinations. To the delight of thousands of fans in attendance and those watching on television, Frazier won this fast and furious fight by a decision highlighted by him knocking down Ali in the 15th round.

Exemplifying a perverted sense of enjoyment that some fans seem to receive from violence is an incident that took place at Philadelphia's Veteran Stadium during an NFL game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Dallas Cowboys in 1999. The incident occurred when Cowboys receiver Michael Irvin landed awkwardly on his head after catching a pass. For 20 minutes, Irvin lay motionless on the turf as he was tended to by his trainers. When the Philadelphia crowd of 66,669 realized Irvin was hurt, many cheered and continued cheering when paramedics removed him from the field on a stretcher.⁷ That fans took pleasure in someone else's potentially life-threatening injuries shows a deficiency in the values of beneficence and compassion. It may be that fans dismissed these values in favor of winning at all costs. Irvin performed splendidly against the Eagles on numerous occasions, which made it difficult for them to achieve victory. The cheering by the Eagles fans might have been an indication of their extreme desire to win football games, believing their chances for victory would improve if Irvin was injured and unable to return to the game.

Attempting to identify moralistic rationale on the part of the Eagles fans is challenging. Cheering when someone on the opposing team is injured is not supported teleologically by moral values. It is unlikely to be supported deontologically, since most people probably would not want people around them cheering if they were seriously injured. From a consequentialist perspective, if we were to use utilitarianism as a guide, the happiness or pleasure brought to the fans who cheered was probably not powerful enough to support the act of cheering. It is doubtful that the most amount of people were made happy, since it is likely that many fans throughout the country were disappointed with the actions of Eagles fans.

Despite the fact that society enjoys these violent sports, if it can be demonstrated that violent sports perpetuate violence in society, organizers should assume the

responsibility for removing violence from games. If a reduction of violence in sport can contribute to the larger goal of decreasing violence in society, organizers should examine ways to make sport less violent.

Sport as a Catharsis for Violence

As previously mentioned, elements of violence are inherent in certain sports. Physical force and even assault are part of sports like football, boxing, and rugby. Outside of sport, tackling or punching someone would be considered assault, yet in the previously mentioned sports it is incorporated within the rules of the game. Thus, using Terry and Jackson's definition of violence in sport,¹ since the behavior is within the rules of the game, tackling in football would not be considered violent; but, using Coakley's definition of violence,² since these sports have the potential to cause physical harm they are, in fact, violent.

Certain violent actions that take place within the framework of the rules of the game are an assumed risk that competitors accept when they agree to compete in a particular sport. Typically, from a liability perspective, "injuries incurred in athletic participation are not of tortuous origin, but they occur rather as a result of the normal risks associated with participation in the sport."^{8(p656)} If, when making the decision to participate in sport, participants are assuming the risk that comes with violent sport, in a sense they are adhering to deontological moral theory in that they are not only accepting the violent aspects of sport for others but also accepting it for themselves. In other words, if you support violent aspects of sport for its participants, and you, as a participant, also willingly accept those same violent aspects, you are operating under a deontological foundation. Recall that deontology is not selective in establishing behavior but instead universalizes it to all.

cathartic aggression: in sport, the release of violence or hostility while participating in sport.

Given the elements of violence in some sports, it seems plausible that violent sport is a stage for **cathartic aggression** in that athletes are able to unleash violence in a more controlled environment against other athletes who have agreed to accept the rules of a sport and the violent conditions of the game. Gill restricts the term aggression to "behaviors intended to harm or injure others."^{9(p196)} Also recognizing intent as being an element of aggression, Coakley defines aggression as "verbal or physical actions grounded in an intent to dominate, control, or do harm to another person."^{2(p203)} Gill further contends that it is difficult to label aggression as inherently desirable or undesirable because it is open to the interpretation of the observer.⁹ Furthermore, if intent is part of the definition of aggression, only the person committing the act truly knows whether or not they intend to harm someone.

One example of aggression in sport is the vicious head butt by French midfielder Zinedine Zidane during the 2006 World Cup soccer final. Prior to Zidane lowering his head and ramming Italy's Marco Materazzi, knocking him to the ground, the two had exchanged words. Zidane, the most valuable player of the World Cup, received a red card and was ejected from the game for his act of aggression.¹⁰ Zidane's behavior meets both Coakley's and Gill's aforementioned

definitions of aggression; it certainly seems that Zidane's head butting was grounded in an intent to do harm to Materazzi.

In one scientific research study, the belief that observing violent sports leads to a reduction in aggressive urges was examined, and it was found that those with a high level of involvement in aggressive sports can lower their level of aggression (symbolic sport catharsis), particularly if the sport is viewed in person.¹¹ Acts of aggression in sport, however, are potentially driven by egoistic thinking. In other words, aggression may not take place for the purpose of providing others with pleasure, but for the purpose of providing oneself with pleasure. If aggression is minimized, altruism and beneficence may surface. Important to note, however, is that the literature does not universally affirm the notion that aggression is reduced in those who participate in more aggressive sports. It might be that aggressive people seek out aggressive or violent sports and remain aggressive despite participation.

Players who compete in violent sports may have an affinity for violence and thus are attracted to violent sports. It could be argued that some persons are violently predisposed and are simply attracted to violent sports. These individuals would not become violent because of their participation in violent sports but because of their violent natures. If this is true, an argument could be made that the sport serves the purpose of allowing a violent person to behave violently in a controlled sport setting.

“The Violent Sport As a Catharsis Controversy”

Mr. Tony Tussle was committed to helping teenage boys stay out of trouble. Once a troubled teen himself, Mr. Tussle grew up on the rough side of town and often found himself in the middle of street fights, and he did not want other teenage boys to find themselves in similar dangerous situations. After much thought, Mr. Tussle decided to offer free boxing lessons to teenage boys in the neighborhood. By offering these lessons at the local gym, Mr. Tussle believed that he was performing a service to the community in that he was getting these boys off the street and into the gym. Interestingly, some adults in the community were challenging Mr. Tussle's efforts because they believed he was creating street thugs by teaching teenage boys how to fight. Mr. Tussle defended his boxing lessons by claiming that when the boys were involved in his lessons, they would be venting their violent energies in the gym instead of on the street.

Questions

1. What moral values, if any, might Mr. Tussle be basing his decision on to offer free boxing lessons to teenagers in the neighborhood?
2. What do you believe are the moral values of the community members who are against Tony Tussle's free boxing lessons?
3. Discuss the potential consequences of Mr. Tussle's decision to provide free boxing lessons to the teenagers in the neighborhood.

More specifically, sports that include physical contact might serve as an outlet in which some participants can release their violent tendencies. And if sport serves as a catharsis for violent persons, it might, to some extent, reduce violence in society. There is currently no evidence to confirm this, of course, but hypothetically speaking, it could be argued that more violently disposed individuals might find some sort of release through participation in more aggressive, even violent, sport.

Public Acceptance of Violent Sports

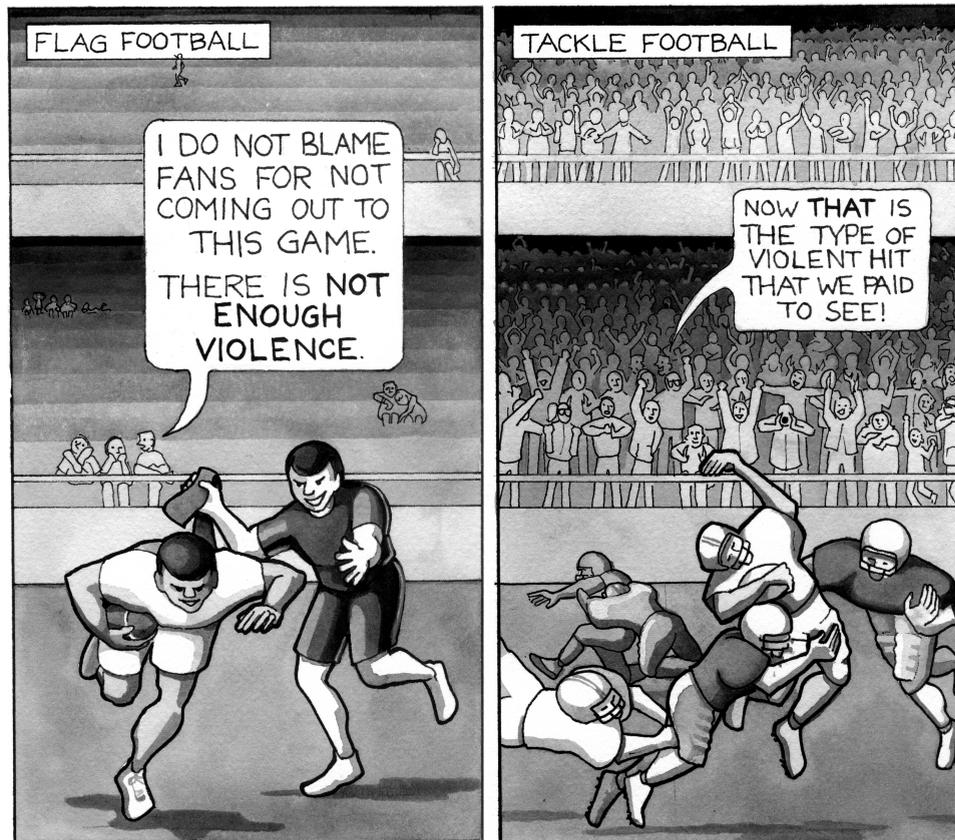
For better or worse, violence is an accepted, even expected, part of many sports. If blame were to be assigned for the perpetuation of violent sports such as boxing and football, there is plenty to go around. Society can be blamed for reinforcing violence not only through their attendance at violent sporting events, but also through their own violent behaviors at those events. Gary Bettman, the commissioner of the NHL, is acutely aware that his league's fan base believes fighting is intrinsic to the game of hockey.⁴ Given that many fans expect and enjoy violence in hockey, the leaders of hockey are thus likely to continue supporting fighting in the sport.

Television networks could be blamed for broadcasting violent sporting events. Despite the potentially negative social value that ultimate fighting brings to society, fighters now enjoy star-like status thanks to media coverage. And the violence sometimes extends off the field. As evidence that ultimate fighting's violence extends beyond the ring, cages are installed around the ring not only to keep the fighters within the designated boundary but also to keep violent fans from entering the ring.⁴ Governing bodies could be blamed for not changing the violent nature of games under their jurisdiction. Competitors could also be blamed for merely participating in these sports.

Obviously, violent sport is supported and reinforced by a wide range of persons and groups. Why, then, should we be concerned with ridding the sporting world of its violent games? Using the tenants of utilitarianism as a guide, the case would have to be made that violence in sport leads more to short- and long-term happiness than to unhappiness. And to meet the utilitarian standard of bringing the most amount of good to the most amount of people, the most amount of good must be brought to those directly and indirectly affected by the violent aspects of sport. In other words, if the participants are the only ones happy with violence in sport, the utilitarian standard would not support violence in sport. However, if more people, overall, are affected in a good way because of violent aspects of sport (such as a vicious hit in football), the utilitarian standard would hold.

Cycle of Violence in Sport

If society disagrees with the notion that sports have to be violent and is interested in creating more peaceful games, we may need to look beyond sport to understand underlying factors that contribute to the creation and support of aggressive and



violent games. For instance, masculinity is thought to be a contributing factor. Historically, boys generally have been raised to be tough and manly. Demonstrations of toughness might include winning schoolyard fights or remaining stoic in the face of physical pain. Violent sport is one avenue that exists for boys and men to explore and demonstrate their toughness.

Team moral atmosphere is also strongly related to athlete aggression.^{12,13} Stephens found that team norms—an important aspect of moral atmosphere—were the strongest predictor of a player's likelihood to play aggressively.¹⁴ When coaches and teammates condone and show support for aggressive or violent behavior, such behavior is more likely to occur. **Team culture** may also be a factor that influences athletes to commit acts of violence outside of sport. Coakley asserts that common targets of such violence include women and others in the community who publicly challenge an athlete's "assumed status and privilege," what he referred to as "hubris."^{2(p173)}

team culture: the general ways of living that are associated with sports teams; team cultures may influence athletes to commit acts of violence outside of sport.

“The Four-Corner Tough Drill”

Coach Young decided his high school team needed some ‘toughening up’ so he called his former high school coach, Coach Tough, to ask for advice. Thirty years Coach Young’s senior, Coach Tough immediately responded with what he referred to as the perfect drill to develop extraordinary toughness in players. The drill was quite simple to set up and execute: Four players are positioned at the corners of a 10-yard by 10-yard square and the player who is to be toughened up is required to stand in the center of the square. When the coach blows the whistle, all four corner players run as hard as possible and inflict vicious simultaneous hits on the player standing in the center. Coach Tough explained that even though serious injuries may result from this drill, the fact that players will be toughened up makes it worth the risk. The four-corner tough drill, according to Coach Tough, had been passed down from previous generations of coaches and over the years has proven its effectiveness through the display of toughness by the teams that used it. Now it is up to Coach Young to decide whether or not to use the four-corner tough drill in his practice.

Questions

1. If you were in Coach Young’s position, using moral reasoning what points would you consider when deciding whether or not to implement the four-corner tough drill?
2. In deciding whether or not to use the four-corner tough drill, which decision-making model—consequentialism, teleological, deontological, or strategic reasoning—would you be most inclined to utilize and why?
3. Is it possible for Coach Young to incorporate a level of toughness in his players yet still be compassionate and caring?

Violence in sport is deeply rooted in locker rooms, coaching staffs, and administrations.¹⁵ It frequently continues after athletes retire from competition and assume leadership roles with sport teams and organizations. When they accept positions as coaches, sport managers, and broadcasters, many former players continue supporting the same violent tendencies they experienced as participants. When Vancouver Canucks player Todd Bertuzzi delivered a vicious blow to Colorado Avalanche’s Steve Moore, instead of roundly condemning the incident, Canucks president/general manager Brian Burke referred to Bertuzzi as a “quality hockey player who made a mistake.”^{4(p64)} Statements like Burke’s do nothing to help break the cycle of sport violence.

What can be done to break this cycle? How can athletes, coaches, and administrators minimize, if not eliminate, violence in sporting contests? To accomplish this task, everyone must consider what their specific role is in reducing violence. Applying teleological moral theory might be helpful in this endeavor, since it is a brand of moral theory that would require athletes, coaches, and administrators to consider the values they should have and uphold to be morally good. The teleological perspective

emphasizes values such as sportsmanship, respect, beneficence, and compassion—values that leave no room for violence in sport. Using a teleological approach, athletes would discipline themselves to not take part in violent behavior, coaches would avoid teaching violent strategies, and administrators would establish rules and sanctions to minimize in-game violence. By emphasizing key moral values, sports people might begin to break the cycle of violence that haunts sport on so many levels.

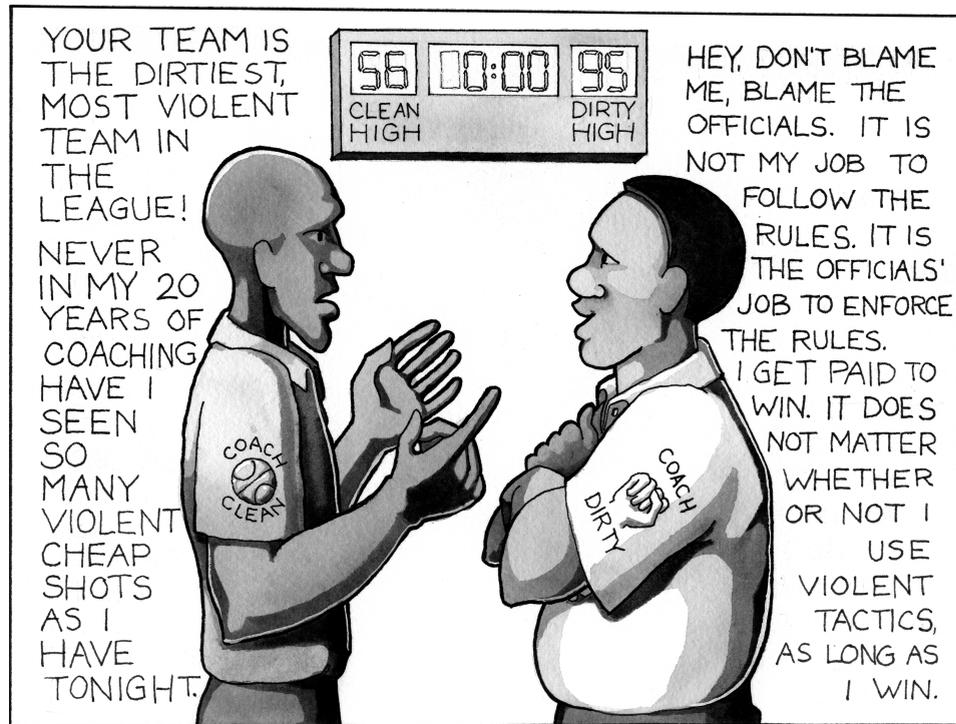
Teaching Violent Strategies

Playing sports and working for the win is a lesson that is as hard for some adults to learn as it is for young people. Coaches who teach violent strategies usually have a personal rationalization for doing so. Common reasons include the notion that “everyone else is doing it”; the claim that it is the job of the officials to enforce rules that prevent violent practices; and the pressures placed on coaches to win is so great that they develop win-at-all-cost philosophies that sometimes include teaching violent strategies.

If some coaches are gaining an advantage by teaching violent strategies to their players, other coaches may feel compelled to do the same. The pressure to keep up with the competition and to win might be, in the minds of many coaches, justification enough to teach violent strategies to gain an advantage or to keep up with those coaches who are already teaching such practices. And the reinforcement of aggressive behavior by coaches influences aggressive reoccurrences.¹⁶ One possible solution is for officials to enforce the rules that are in place to prevent in-game violence. A prohibition on in-game violence can reinforce values such as integrity and respect for opponents. Although the legislation and enforcement of rules against fighting may not bring about genuine respect among opponents, it reinforces the notion that fighting is considered inappropriate by governing bodies and officials. In other words, game officials and referees can play an instrumental role in preventing the teaching of violent strategies and practices by diligently enforcing rules designed to stop it.

Players and coaches normally modify their decisions and actions throughout a game, depending on how officials interpret and enforce rules. Game #4 of the 2006 National Basketball Association’s (NBA) Championship series between the Miami Heat and the Dallas Mavericks serves as an example of how officials can control potentially violent situations. When Jerry Stackhouse of the Mavericks flagrantly fouled Shaquille O’Neal of the Heat, tempers flared, making for an atmosphere poised for violent retaliation. The officials, however, controlled the environment by calling fouls for even slight physical contact until the players regained their composure.

If officials allow aggressive and violent play, players and coaches may become more violent in an effort to gain an advantage. Coaches may even instruct players to play more violently in games in which an official(s) has a reputation for not enforcing rules that prevent violence. However, most scoring prevention strategies that coaches can teach their players can improve their chances of winning without resorting to violence. Thus, it is important that officials enforce rules established by governing bodies that disallow dangerous/violent strategies. For example, it is against the rules in basketball for a defensive player to undercut an offensive player. Undercutting is a technique in



which a defensive player initiates contact against an air-born offensive player—usually as he is driving in the lane and attempting to score—rendering the offensive player helpless in trying to control his landing. Players rarely land on their feet when they are undercut; usually they land face first or on the side of their body. Making undercutting even more dangerous is the fact that the offensive player is usually traveling at a high rate of speed and is elevated well off the ground at the time of impact. Undercutting is a flagrant foul of the rules of basketball, and if officials aren't vigilant in enforcing it, coaches might teach it to their players as a strategy to defend against scoring.

Given the philosophy of win-at-all-costs that exists in some sporting circles, it should come as no surprise when coaches teach and encourage aggressive or violent tactics. Thus, using deontological moral theory, is the teaching of violent tactics acceptable in a win-at-all-costs environment? If those involved in the sport are willing to accept the same infliction of violence on themselves as they inflict on others, in effect they are meeting the universalization standard of deontology. They are acting toward others in a way that they are willing to accept as a way for others to act toward them. Unfortunately, this win-at-all-cost philosophy often leads to and reinforces the type of unethical aggressive behaviors that impact negatively and destructively on the development and well-being of young athletes and on society in general.¹⁷ But, with the pressures to win, can we realistically expect players and coaches to follow rules to

the letter, to not circumvent them in some way? This question might draw mixed responses from coaches. Coaches who value sportsmanship and compassion will teach their players to play safely and within the rules of the game, whereas coaches who emphasize strategic reasoning often will teach their players violent tactics that are outside the rules.

As a way to control aggression in young athletes, Nucci and Young-Shim¹⁶ recommend that coaches should not be promoted or fired based solely on their win-loss record. If coaches act under the theory of psychological hedonism, they would seek out the actions that bring them pleasure or those that would help them elude painful consequences. If getting fired is a painful consequence of losing, coaches might go to extreme measures to win. When having to choose between losing or winning through the teaching of violent tactics, the latter may cause less pain and more pleasure for a coach since getting fired could be a painful consequence of losing.

Abiding By the Rules to Prevent Violence

If coaches have agreed to be part of games that have preexisting guidelines and rules, it seems reasonable to expect them to operate within those parameters. If coaches circumvent these rules and officials do not enforce them, the game will change and might even take on the personality of a different sport. For example, at what point do violent strategies and tactics turn basketball into a game more similar to football? If a sport is to maintain the challenges and skills that make it unique, coaches, players, and administrators should also assume the responsibility of abiding by the rules that help define their sport. And officials must diligently enforce those same rules. From a teleological perspective, abiding by the rules that govern the game, including those that prevent violence, reinforce the values of respect and honor for the game. The integrity of the game is maintained when rules are well thought out and are adhered to by everyone involved.

“Taking the Violence Out of Boxing”

The organizers of professional boxing have decided that boxing must be made less violent because it increases violence in society. In other words, when fans watch boxing, they become more violent and are more likely to get into fights. The organizers have decided the best way to take the violence out of boxing is to no longer allow boxers to punch each other. Instead of punching live opponents, the boxers will be scored on how hard they hit heavy bags and how quickly they hit speed bags. Officials will measure the percussion of 100 hits to the heavy bag. Hits to the heavy bag will consist of left and right jabs, crosses, and uppercuts. The boxer who hits the bag the hardest will score the most points. Boxers will also be scored on how many times they can hit the speed bag in two minutes. The highest combined score of the heavy bag and speed bag will be the winner. In other words, much like golf, a winner in boxing will be determined without inflicting any physical pain or violence against an opponent.

“Taking the Violence Out of Boxing” (Continued)

When long-time heavyweight boxing champion Barney, “the brutal butcher,” heard of the changes, he screamed at the top of his lungs, “Are you kidding me?! Boxing is all about contact! I want to hit someone, and if I get hit, so what? If I did not want contact, I would have decided to play golf or badminton. If you organizers change the rules of boxing, you will also have to change the name of the sport, because it will no longer be boxing!”

Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with Barney’s opinion regarding the newly proposed rules of boxing?
2. If evidence exists that proves boxing does increase societal violence, do you think boxing should be made less violent? Explain your answer.
3. Make a moral argument from a consequentialist, teleological, or deontological perspective that supports *keeping*, as part of boxing, the most violent aspects, such as punching opponents in the face.
4. Make a moral argument from a consequentialist, teleological, or deontological perspective that supports *removing* from boxing the most violent aspects, such as punching opponents in the face.

The Glorification of Winning and its Perpetuation of Violence

Try as those directly affiliated with sport might, external influences make it extremely difficult to lessen or eradicate violence in sport. An argument can be made that it is the glorification of winning and its accompanying rewards that cause the violent rules infractions that frequently occur. Materialistic rewards such as money, trophies, and prizes, along with non-materialistic rewards such as praise, recognition, and adulation motivate athletes to win. Does the probability of athletes engaging in illegal tactics and violent rule-breaking behavior increase as the value of the reward for winning increases?

If we removed the rewards associated with victory, would violent incidents be as prevalent in sport? For example, would an athlete be driven to win at all costs if the competition took place out of the public eye, without any external recognition or rewards? Some people might argue that the removal of strong extrinsic motivators would reduce the occurrences of violence in sport. A sports person who reasons strategically, reasons egoistically and is focused on personal gain. An athlete, coach, or general manager who reasons strategically might very well base his/her actions on gaining external rewards. On the other hand, many athletes and non-athletes are naturally competitive, regardless of whether or not the setting is sport related. Such individuals may commit acts of violence during sport competition out of frustration when they believe they are not achieving their goals. That is, acts of violence in sport may be spontaneous and not based on any form of moral theory.

Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett¹⁷ acknowledge that frustration may stimulate aggressive behavior in athletes, which may partially explain sport aggression. The frustration that accompanies the failure to achieve a goal often increases the likelihood of aggressive acts.^{18,19} For example, poor play in an important contest such as a rivalry game, playoff, tournament, or championship match might influence an athlete to react violently when fouled or contacted aggressively. This reaction may have nothing to do with the extrinsic rewards that accompany victory, but instead be simply the frustrated response of a highly competitive athlete.

Does Eliminating Violence Eliminate the Game?

As discussed in the previous section, rewards and the glorification of those who win can perpetuate violence. A win-at-all-cost approach that results in violent behavior might be restrained if the sport had no fans to applaud or jeer, no trophies to win, and no recognition to be gained. However, removing the fans and the rewards and the accolades would not eliminate violence completely from sport. By definition, athletes are highly competitive, some more aggressively so than others, and there is an element of aggression in most sports. Given the commercial interests, finances, and capitalistic forces involved in the structure and operation of many sporting endeavors, it is probably unrealistic to entertain the notion of sport without fans, recognition, and rewards. The purpose of most sports, at least at the elite level, is as much about revenue generation as it is about displays of athletic prowess. Of course, that is not to say that sport as a moral endeavor should be sacrificed to greed.

The person who supports the reduction of violence over the generation of revenue might be more interested in the best available state of affairs for sport, which is a consequentialist way of thinking. The consequentialist who is guided by utilitarianism could argue that reducing violence in sport is the best available state of affairs for all involved in sport. Conversely, if revenue is necessary to continue to be able to operate a sport and/or sport league, utilitarianism might support the generation of revenue for the purpose of being able to continue to provide the good that sport generates.

Another possible option for minimizing in-game violence would be to eliminate the violent part of each particular sport. It is the rules and conventions of games like football and ice hockey that leave room for violence within these sports. Why not simply change the rules and disallow the violent acts that have become part of the game? Is it possible to do so without changing the game itself? Removing the violence from inherently violent sports would drastically alter their very traditions and popularity. Such actions would certainly meet opposition from the athletes, coaches, administrators, and spectators who value sports that have aggressive or violent aspects. Those who support violent sports could argue that altering contact sports by removing the violent aspects would take away the very same traits that partially define the game. For example, if fighting was no longer allowed in American hockey, the game may need to be renamed as something other than hockey since professional hockey in the United States is known for and partially defined as, a sport that includes fighting.

What arguments might advocates of violence-prone sports make to support violence in their games? A deontologically based argument might well serve such advocates. If a deontologist believes that the violent aspects within a game are appropriate for others, he must also believe those same violent-like aspects are appropriate for him. Deontologists must be willing to make general law the principles to which they adhere. In other words, violent aspects of the game may not be supported by all who are involved, but if someone has a deontological perspective, he or she must believe it to be appropriate to be exposed to the same in-game aspects of violence as all of the other participants.

Reducing some of the most violent aspects might be a realistic modification of some violent sports, but making wholesale changes that eliminate all violent aspects is unlikely, as is banning a sport completely because it is too violent. But, if banning a sport because of violence is unlikely to be supported by those affiliated, is there an acceptable compromise? How can in-game violence be reduced or eliminated without also eliminating the very things that make contact sports desirable enterprises? These are questions that sport-governing bodies will need to address as they oversee sports and the future of sports.

Peripheral Violence

peripheral violence: violence resulting from sport by those other than sport participants during the game. Violence by fans and hazing are examples of peripheral violence.

Peripheral violence in sport can be loosely described as violence that is related to a sporting event but is not directly part of the game itself and does not involve fighting among players. It occurs at all levels of sports and athletics, from youth leagues to professional leagues, and also includes the practice of hazing. Examples of peripheral violence include violence between players and fans, fans fighting with other fans, post-game rioting, and violent hazing. An example of player/fan violence occurred in the NHL in 2001, when Tie Domi of the Toronto Maple Leafs pulled a Philadelphia Flyers fan into the penalty box and started fighting with him.²⁰

A more violent example of peripheral violence is the riot that ensued outside of Major League Baseball's (MLB) historic Fenway Park after the Boston Red Sox defeated the New York Yankees in the 2004 American League Championship Series. Boston police used pellet-like guns in their attempt to subdue a crowd outside the ballpark estimated to be between 60,000 and 80,000. Police were trying to stop riotous fans from overturning cars, starting fires, vandalizing cars and stores, and climbing the "Green Monster" wall. Tragically, one of the projectiles from an officer's gun hit an innocent bystander in the eye and killed her.²¹

Another incident of peripheral violence was the rioting after Togo took a lead in a World Cup soccer qualifier game against Mali. Officials stopped the game after fans at the 70,000-seat sold-out stadium rushed the field. As the rioters took to the streets, dozens of people were injured as fans set cars ablaze, looted shops, destroyed monuments, and burned down a multi-story building housing the local Olympic committee.²²



5-2 *Fan violence is an example of peripheral violence.*

Acts of peripheral violence are somewhat difficult to rationalize using the three deontological moral theories presented or using strategic reasoning. From a strategic reasoning perspective, it is difficult to explain a real advantage that is gained through peripheral violence. The player who goes into the stands to fight a fan who threw a cup of beer at him gains no real game advantage. The same could be said for post-game rioting. Although the rioting might be linked to fan emotion after a championship victory, no real game-related advantage can be identified based on the action of rioting.

Spectator Violence

There are many varieties of spectator violence in modern sports. Fans often verbally abuse and fight one another in the stands. Cassandra Johnson, the wife of Dallas Maverick's head coach Avery Johnson, was involved in an altercation in the stands during a 2006 NBA Western Conference finals game against the Phoenix Suns. Allegedly, Mrs. Johnson became belligerent after complaining that two Phoenix Suns season ticket holders were standing too much. Witnesses said that Mrs. Johnson took three swings at a female fan, but missed and instead hit her fiancée.²³

Fans also attack coaches. Kansas City Royals first base coach, Tom Gamboa, was attacked during the 2002 MLB season. A 34-year-old male fan and his 15-year-old son charged onto the field and tackled Gamboa. Fortunately, Royals players quickly intervened, restraining the two crazed fans, and Gamboa escaped with only minor cuts and bruises.²⁴ A chilling incident of peripheral violence took place in Dallas, Texas, at Canton High School in April of 2005, when the parent of a ninth grade football player, upset at his son's lack of playing time, shot his son's football coach/athletic director in the chest. Fortunately, the coach survived the attack.²⁵ Perhaps unsurprisingly, game officials have

long been targets of abuse, from spectators and participants alike. Referees are often verbally abused or threatened when they make what others see as a bad call or don't make a call at all. Some referees have even needed police escorts after highly charged games.²⁶

Unruly fan behavior is often linked, perhaps not surprisingly, to alcohol consumption.²⁷ Fans often begin drinking at tailgate parties and local bars long before game time and are intoxicated when they enter the ballpark. College football is especially representative of the kind of overindulgence that leads to disturbing, riotous, celebratory alcohol-fueled incidents following games. After the Ohio State football team defeated arch rival Michigan in 2002, the celebration in Columbus made its way from the stadium to the streets, where eventually it turned riotous. Fans drank and urinated in the streets, assaulted one another, and committed acts of vandalism, including overturning cars and setting them on fire. Students kept the fires burning by fueling them with furniture from their apartments. Columbus police were unable to restore order until the early hours of the next morning, using riot gear and tear gas.²⁸ Incidents like these have contributed to limiting or even banning beer sales at many sports events. By stopping beer sales at a designated time—such as the end of the 7th inning in baseball and the end of the 3rd quarter in football—the belief is that fans will have time to sober up before leaving the facility, decreasing the likelihood of alcohol-fueled violent behavior.



5-3 *Peripheral violence on the part of fans is sometimes fueled by alcohol consumption.*

“Beer Sales and Violence”

The general manager of the Redbirds minor league baseball team, Martin Manager, is considering eliminating alcohol sales at the Redbirds’ ballpark. Martin has become convinced that alcohol was the cause of last week’s post-game parking lot riot between Redbirds fans and rival Bluebirds fans. Police had to be called to restore order; several fans suffered serious injuries and dozens more were arrested when the riot spread to surrounding neighborhoods. However, two owning partners of the Redbirds are pressuring Martin to continue selling alcohol at the ballpark because it is a significant revenue generator for the franchise.

Questions

1. If you were the Redbirds general manager, what *factors* would you consider when arriving at your final decision regarding banning or continuing alcohol sales at the Redbirds ballpark?
2. As the general manager of the Redbirds, using teleological moral theory, what *values* would you consider when arriving at your final decision regarding banning or continuing alcohol sales at the Redbirds ballpark?
3. In whose best interest is it to ban alcohol sales? In whose best interest is it to continue alcohol sales?

From a moralistic perspective, it is difficult to defend unruly fan behavior. It is doubtful that most fans would welcome violent behavior to be directed at them (a deontological perspective). It is also doubtful that the most amount of good for the most amount of people results from unruly fan behavior (a utilitarian perspective). And moral values such as respect and honor are not practiced when fans behave violently (a teleological perspective).

Post-Game Rioting

Post-game rioting that breaks out in neighborhoods surrounding sport facilities or college campuses is destructive, dangerous, and gives sports as well as local communities a bad name. It often involve setting fires, overturning cars, and fighting in the streets. Although post-game riots seem to occur most frequently following championship games, they sometimes occur after rivalry games or any other regularly scheduled game. Many times, the people involved are not even sport fans; they are people from the area who take a perverted pleasure in celebrating or partying in a destructive manner. Over the years, riots have taken place in major sports cities following professional championships. There was rioting in Chicago following the Bulls’ NBA world championships and in Los Angeles when the Lakers won the NBA championship. Although a byproduct of some

post-game rioting: violent disorder by people following a sporting contest; post-game rioting by fans sometimes occurs after their team wins a championship.

high-stake events such as rivalry games in certain sports, post-game rioting is difficult to justify morally when applying the moral decision-making models of consequentialism, teleology, and deontology.

It is difficult to see any moral value in such violent activities. Aside from the waste of community resources and money needed to combat rioting, the senseless acts of vandalism and personal injury that accompany rioting are morally problematic. If respect for people and their belongings is important in American society, such acts of vandalism should not be tolerated. This point must be emphasized in campaigns aimed at preventing post-game rioting. If moralistic approaches can be encouraged that emphasize practicing good values, respecting others as we would respect ourselves, and understanding the effect that our actions have on others, post-game violence and rioting might be deterred. Society should assume a position of responsibility and practice the morals it preaches, lead by example, and act in morally good ways. Morally good actions on the part of society could help decrease violence that sometimes results from high-stake events in certain sports.

Spectator/Player Violence

Altercations between spectators and players disrupt the essence of sport, which should be a safe and fair contest between like-skilled competitors. These altercations can be precipitated by fans who overstep their boundaries by insulting players, threatening them, throwing bottles, batteries, or other objects at them, or jumping fences and attacking them. During the 2006 MLB season, a fan tossed a syringe at San Francisco Giants slugger Barry Bonds as he came off the field between innings at San Diego's Petco Park.²⁹ Bonds has undergone intense public and media scrutiny regarding his rumored use of steroids to boost his performance. Bonds' efforts to become the all-time MLB home run leader over Hank Aaron and Babe Ruth has been overshadowed by his alleged use of steroids. Throwing a syringe at Bonds was probably symbolic of the animosity many baseball fans have for Bonds, believing he is breaking home run records unfairly.

The way an athlete responds to an abusive fan can be indicative of his or her moral values. For instance, a player operating from a teleological perspective would not retaliate against an abusive fan. The player who does retaliate is not practicing the moral values of respect and honor, of beneficence and altruism. Unfortunately, players with less self-restraint sometimes let their emotions get the best of them and have gone into the stands after their tormenters or have thrown objects at them. During spring of the 1922 professional baseball season, Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers jumped over a guard rail and ran up 12 rows to punch, kick, and gash (with the spikes on his shoes) a heckling fan.³⁰ In a more recent incident, during the 2004–2005 NBA season, Ron Artest of the Indiana Pacers went into the stands to attack a fan who tossed a beer at him.³⁰ Professional leagues and their governing bodies now mete out strong punishments to players who go after spectators, as evidenced by the 73-game suspension handed out to Artest. Stiff fines and suspensions hopefully deter other athletes from such undisciplined actions in order to preserve the long-term best interests of the game, a consequentialist point of view.

Can anything be done to reduce the incidents of spectator/player violence? Increasing security at sporting events and limiting the sale of alcohol are good preventative measures, but they will not entirely stop such incidents from occurring. Nor will the threat of tougher penalties stop some players from retaliating against abusive fans. Athletes and fans alike must treat each other with respect; if they look upon one another as fellow human beings rather than as enemies, they will be less likely to verbally insult or physically assault one another. To adopt a teleological approach would mean to practice the moral values of respect, honesty, trust, and beneficence, an approach that would benefit not just sport participants and spectators, but perhaps society in general.

Granted, expecting athletes to be ruthlessly competitive on the field yet non-violent off the field is often easier said than done. Some athletes have difficulty balancing the demands placed on them. Retired Oakland Raider linebacker Bill Romanowski described the difficulty in being both a family man and a football player in the NFL.³ And given the frustration that athletes and fans of poorly performing teams frequently experience, it can be difficult to behave as a humanitarian when potentially explosive moments arise in the heat of competition. Those who train themselves teleologically to act out of compassion and beneficence rather than anger and frustration will be better equipped to deal humanely and rationally at moments when violence is an option. Those who decide to not act violently because they would not want others to act violently toward them are basing their actions on deontological moral theory. Those who are aware of the negative long-term consequences of violent behavior are acting under consequentialism and the overall good that comes from a utilitarian approach.

Youth Sport Violence

It is unsettling enough when fans of professional and college sport teams act violently toward other fans, officials, and players. It is more unsettling when parents behave violently at their own children's sporting events. Youth sports are not immune to violence. Sometimes parents and fans take out their ire on officials, who often are local community members volunteering their services or trying to make a few extra dollars. Those people who act out violently are not considering the long-term best interests of youth athletes, who model their behavior on the adults and the environment around them.

At times arguments break out between opposing fans or even parents or fans of children on the same team. Violent outbursts of this kind have led many youth leagues to require parents to sign codes of conduct in order to attend their children's games, restrict spectator viewing areas in a way that prevents spectators from getting close to the playing surface, and even enforce bans against cheering. Wakefield and Wann recommend the following remedies to control fan behavior: (a) award points or match points to opposing teams when unruly fans disrupt play; (b) ban or suspend fans guilty of disruptive or violent behavior; (c) prohibit signs, clothing, or verbal assaults that denigrate rivals and ban such offenders from games; and (d) limit attendance in terms of total restrictions or by segments (adults, parents, students) likely to cause disruption.^{31(p181)}

Policies and procedures that are well thought out can help curtail violent incidents, but it is the value of respect that is most crucial. If people recognize that they are dealing with other people and not things, they are more likely to think twice before using violence against one another. Practicing good moral values because you are compelled to do so could be more effective in preventing violence in sport than not behaving immorally for fear of policy-based punishment. To act teleologically, parents must make a conscious effort to practice good moral values such as compassion, respect, and honor. It is highly doubtful that parents would want other parents to act violently toward them or their children; therefore, a deontological point of view does not support violent behavior by parents.

Hazing and Violence

The definition of hazing addresses several specific ways in which hazing can occur. In the **Hazing Prohibition Act of 2003**, hazing is defined as “any assumption of authority by a student whereby another student suffers or is exposed to any cruelty, intimidation, humiliation, embarrassment, hardship, or oppression, or is required to perform exercises to excess, to become sleep deprived, to commit dangerous activities, to curry favor from those in power, to submit to physical assaults, to consume offensive foods or alcohol, or the threat of bodily harm or death, or the deprivation or abridgement of any right.”^{32(p1)}

Hazing Prohibition Act of 2003: the United State's first piece of proposed federal anti-hazing legislation introduced by Rep. Diane Watson (D-CA) on March 11, 2003.

Often hazing is directed by a team's leaders and actions are performed on, or required of, persons aspiring to be members of the group. Prospective members who successfully undergo hazing are unofficially or officially recognized as members of the group. Hazing is not restricted to sport; it takes place within many groups and in various forms. Hazing often includes acts that are embarrassing or humiliating to the person being hazed. Minor and serious injury can and does result from hazing.

The general application of moral theories to examples of hazing might be helpful in making good decisions related to hazing. Using deontological moral theory, would those who engage in hazing willingly accept that they be hazed? From a deontological perspective, unless someone is willing to be hazed they should not haze others. Using teleological moral theory, if hazing is usually humiliating and disrespectful to the person(s) being hazed, you should not engage in hazing. Using the utilitarian form of consequentialist moral theory, you would have to make a case that hazing produces the best available state of affairs and the greatest amount of good possible, which seems unlikely. Thus, if applying any of the three theories of moral reasoning discussed in this text, you would find little support for hazing.

Grievous injury as a result of hazing does occur and serves as a sobering reminder of the seriousness of the act. Historically, common forms of hazing in sport have included forced consumption of alcohol to the point of vomiting or losing consciousness, physical abuse that is often tortuous, acts of humiliation, and sexual abuse. Hazing has gained widespread attention thanks to the Internet. As Internet usage

grows and events are easily recorded by anyone with a cell phone or other device equipped to capture pictures or videos, more and more accounts of hazing are being recorded and shown online. Hazing incidents are also uploaded to websites like facebook.com and badjocks.com.³³

In 2006, numerous websites included photographs of hazing from more than a dozen colleges. The photographs showed what appeared to be initiation scenes in which athletes were drinking excessively, wearing degrading costumes, caught in sexually suggestive poses with strippers and fellow athletes, and leading a blindfolded woman, with her hands tied behind her back, down a staircase. The Internet postings led to disciplinary action against some of the schools, including the baseball team at Elon University in Elon, North Carolina, and the women's soccer team at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.³⁴

Acts of hazing are problematic to sport. According to Hawes, college athletes have been forced to engage in the following hazing acts: drink Tabasco sauce concoctions and run with cookies wedged between their buttocks, get tattoos, have their athletic supporters or sports bras coated with Cramer's Icy Hot, run a mile or play a game of soccer in the nude, be kidnapped, be tied to a teammate, be tied naked to benches in locker rooms, be blindfolded and forced to find their way across campus, and forced to urinate on each other.³⁵ In the worst hazing cases in sport, some athletes have been spanked, beaten, branded, and sodomized with brooms wrapped in athletic tape or with frozen bananas or hot dogs.³⁵

Equally disturbing is that some authority figures in sport actually support such types of hazing. Sometimes adults affiliated with athletic teams and programs, such as coaches and athletic directors, turn a blind eye to hazing. Coaches sometimes even become actively involved in the hazing of players. Such was the case in 2000 when the basketball coach at Winslow High School in Arizona was indicted on three felony counts of child abuse for a hazing-related incident.³⁶

From the examples described above, it may be difficult to discover any good that results from hazing. But although hazing is generally perceived as negative, it would be irresponsible to at least not examine the possibility of potential good that can result from the practice. Recall that an act can be supported morally in utilitarianism if more good than bad results from an act. Is it possible that the good that comes from non-violent hazing is greater than the bad that comes from violent hazing? Can hazing have positive effects? Researchers in one study, in which 2000 undergraduate students were surveyed, found that participation in hazing behavior was perceived to be fun, a positive team builder, and encouraged group cohesion.³⁷ When rookie teammates go through the same initiation that veteran players went through, the new players are recognized as part of the team since they 'survived' the same initiation as the veterans. Those undergoing the ritual of initiation thus do so to earn respect from their more established teammates and to display their loyalty to their new team.

Is it the initiation itself or is it the degree of the uniqueness or danger of the initiation that creates team bonding and camaraderie? In other words, do more dangerous

forms of hazing create stronger team bonds? Irrespective of the answer to this question, it does seem somewhat preposterous to argue that engaging in dangerous and life-threatening hazing for the purpose of team bonding and camaraderie is morally justifiable, and there are many people who want hazing prohibited. People opposed to its practice are up against those who believe hazing is nothing more than harmless fun that builds character.³⁸ But even if hazing does build character, which is debatable, should the enhancement of character supersede the moral value of respect? Can character be developed through acts of hazing that are embarrassing, humiliating, and degrading?

At first glance, hazing may seem like harmless nonsense or a rite of initiation that draws members of a team closer together.³⁸ If it can be proven that some good does come from hazing, then instead of dismissing all forms of hazing it may be more prudent to dismiss only those acts that are dangerous and life-threatening. From a consequentialist viewpoint, exercising non-dangerous forms of hazing for the purpose of gaining benefits such as team unity and cohesion may be acceptable. The level of humiliation suffered by those who are hazed is an important consideration from a moral perspective. Deontological moral theorists might ask if non-dangerous forms of hazing like carrying the team's equipment or singing songs in public are acts that could be reasonable from a moral perspective for all team members. Teleologists might ask if morally good teammates would request that new team members do these things. If the level of humiliation for those being hazed is low or negligible, then perhaps such actions would be ethically acceptable from deontological, teleological, and consequentialist perspectives.

It would be helpful to understand whether or not there is a distinction between hazing and initiations rituals. Initiation usually includes steps that individuals must take to be admitted into an organization. Initiation is considered hazing if it contains the elements of hazing that include but are not necessarily limited to cruelty, intimidation, humiliation, embarrassment, hardship, or oppression. Hazing involves acts that are potentially painful, harmful, humiliating, and deadly. In a study examining hazing, researchers considered—based on their university's definition of hazing—the following activities to be hazing: participating in a drinking contest/games; being deprived of sleep; being kidnapped or transported and abandoned; acting as a personal servant to others; destroying or stealing property; being tied, taped up, or confined; engaging in or simulating sexual acts; being hit, kicked, or physically assaulted in some form; and making body alterations such as branding, tattooing, and piercing.³⁷

Initiation rituals, on the other hand, are positive events in which team unity is celebrated in an atmosphere of respect for one another and for the team or school to which team members belong. Initiations include such things as teammates receiving their uniforms at a special ceremony honoring them for making the team. If initiation does foster the moral values of honor and respect, then this type of initiation is supported by teleological theory. As Hawes points out, initiation is often tradition based, necessary, and often in need of adult supervision; as long as responsible adult supervision is a part of initiation, those being initiated will most likely reap positive

benefits.³⁵ An evening of initiation might also be an opportunity to introduce players to team history and explain the pre-game rituals that many teams develop over time. Other things can be added, but the focus of the evening should be on unity and the important bond between teammates. New players should be made to feel welcome and that they are becoming a part of something special. Initiations do not include acts of humiliation. Deontological moral theory calls for persons who are honoring and respecting others through initiation ceremonies to expect the same conditions of honor and respect if and when they are initiated.

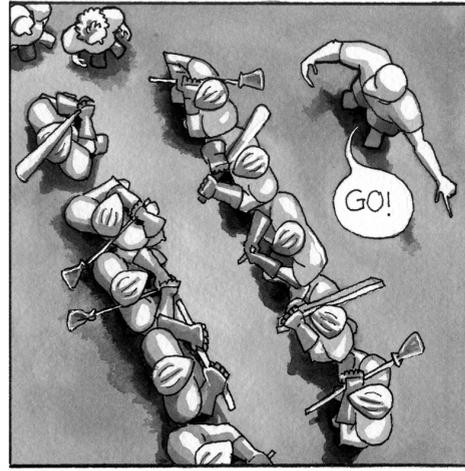
Hazing is an ongoing cycle of repeated behavior and is often continued over the years, based on statements like, “I had it done to me, so you have to have it done to you,” or “I did it so you have to do it.” Statements like these that do not follow any logical line of thought or reason, but rather a “monkey see, monkey do” mindset, are ineffective in demonstrating the good that may result from hazing. Deontologically, the claim that first-year athletes should have to endure hazing because other teammates, who most likely disliked it, had to endure it does not hold up morally. If hazing is not something you would want to go through yourself, then it is not something you would want everyone to go through. Hence, it is not an ethically acceptable act according to deontological moral theory.

“Coach and Captains Debate Hazing”

One of the first agenda items for the new hockey coach, Coach Cease, was to meet with the three senior team captains and make clear his position on hazing. Coach Cease began by saying that he was against all forms of hazing and that if they worked together, Coach Cease and the captains could put an end to the cycle of hazing that has been a part of the hockey team for many years. Coach Cease continued by saying that he did not want to ban hazing completely without input from his team captains. In describing their positions on the issue, the team captains recalled how they did not enjoy being hazed three years ago but believed it was helpful for team camaraderie and team building. After patiently listening to the team captains, Coach Cease pointed out that they should seize this opportunity to rid the hockey team of the dangerous practice of hazing and gain the respect of the community for doing so. Coach Cease further explained that schools that do not put an end to hazing will continually be faced with hazing-related lawsuits.

Questions

1. Regarding their positions on hazing, do you side with Coach Cease or the three captains? Provide reasons for your answer.
2. Using deontology as a foundation, point out reasons in support of Coach Cease’s position to ban hazing.
3. Using strategic reasoning, point out reasons to support the three captains’ position to continue the tradition of hazing.



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Because of the seriousness of hazing, federal legislation has been proposed against it, but can legislation guarantee the eradication of violent hazing and the serious injuries and deaths that sometimes result? Are laws adequate in their detailing of unacceptable behaviors and correlative punishments? Or do others, including athletes, coaches, sport managers, and parents, have a moral responsibility to put an end to hazing? Everyone involved in sport, including society as a whole, can have a positive impact by becoming vigilant against hazing. This approach might be similar to neighborhood watch groups. Understanding the difference between hazing and positive initiation rituals, and recognizing that loyalty often follows respect can perhaps help eliminate the practice of hazing and improve sport's image as an endeavor that encourages and rewards good moral character along with athletic prowess.

Conclusion

The numerous in-game and peripheral violence issues discussed in this chapter should be of concern to anyone who wishes to reduce unnecessary violence in sport. Athletes, coaches, administrators, and fans alike must come together and acknowledge the violence surrounding sports and collaborate on ways to reduce or eliminate it. It is the moral responsibility of everyone involved in sport to create a safe environment for the enjoyment of participants and spectators alike. By understanding the factors that contribute to unnecessary violence, sporting communities can take proactive steps to safeguard their environment and preserve its integrity.

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High School Hockey Brawl From a Player's Perspective

This past Saturday night, our hockey team, Fairplay High School, had a home game scheduled against Cheapshot High School. This game had special meaning since it would affect our sectional tournament seedings. The last time we played Cheapshot High, they beat us 4–2. As a result, we were bound and determined not to be defeated again. As the game began, Cheapshot High was playing overly aggressive to the point that they were living up to their name. The one penalty called against Cheapshot in the first period helped us, as we scored a power play goal with five minutes remaining in the period to take a 1–0 lead.

The second period started off the same as the first. Cheapshot High kept taking cheap shots, and the referees seemed to ignore them, not calling any penalties. During the 12th minute of the second period, one of Cheapshot High's players, Hitman Hank, slammed into our goalie, Goaltender Gregg, who retaliated by punching him. Goaltender Gregg was given a five-minute major penalty for fighting, yet Cheapshot High's player was not penalized. After it became apparent, in our team's view, that the referees were not calling enough infractions against Cheapshot High, our mindset changed. If Cheapshot could inflict what we perceived to be cheap shots without being penalized, then we could fight fire with fire and retaliate in kind. This was an important game and we were not going to be pushed around.

During Goaltender Gregg's major penalty, Cheapshot High scored two quick goals, putting them up 2-1 at the end of the second period. Five minutes into the third period, Cheapshot High's Slasher Sam slashed our star forward, Sammy Star, causing him to fall down, injured. Sammy Star was later diagnosed with a grade one contusion. Slasher Sam's actions resulted in a bench-clearing brawl. To our surprise, the referees cancelled the game after the fight. Even more surprising, the next day at a team meeting our coach told us that the district decided to cancel the rest of our season, including sectionals. I was shocked. This was my senior year and I had my heart set on winning sectionals. My temper was at a boiling point because I was not talented enough to play hockey in college. The tournament was all I had left, and it was being taken from me. To make matters worse, I was not even a participant in the fight.

That night I went home angry and told my parents what had happened. They already knew that the season had been canceled because it was broadcast on the news. At dinner I tried to explain my frustrations, but my Dad wasn't on my side. He also said that some of my teammates should be glad they did not get arrested for committing assault. My dad then suggested that I go to the school board meeting the next day to voice my opinions. Although I do not like speaking in public, this was too important to me to not get involved. To keep my season from ending, I had to succeed in my goal of convincing the school board to not punish the entire team.

Critical Thinking: Finding Common-Sense Solutions

- 1.** As a coach, what would you do if, in your opinion, the referees were calling an uneven game and placing your players in danger?
- 2.** What could the referees have done differently, if anything, to prevent this fight?
- 3.** As a player, what factors do you believe should be considered when deciding how to deal with the actions of Hitman Hank? Slasher Sam? The referees? The team as a whole? What factors would you consider as the coach? As the athletic director?

4. Do you believe the entire team should be punished, even if not all team members were involved in the fight? Why or why not?
5. As an athletic director, would you have suspended the team or the players involved in the fight if the district had taken no action?
6. If you were responsible for developing district policy, would you treat all fighting the same, or would you address fighting on an individual, case-by-case basis? Explain your answer. What would you include in your policy?

Critical Thinking: Moral Theory-Based Decision Making

7. Is fighting in hockey ethical from the point of view of either deontological or teleological moral theory? Why or why not?
8. Identify one of your above answers as one that is based on moral reasoning. Describe some characteristics of moral reasoning and demonstrate how your answer is, in fact, based on these characteristics of moral reasoning.
9. Identify one of your above answers as one that is based on strategic reasoning. Describe some characteristics of strategic reasoning and demonstrate how your answer is, in fact, based on these characteristics of strategic reasoning.

Hazing Julie

Julie was a freshman on the women's college basketball team and had just finished participating in a captains practice (a practice without the presence of any coaches). Although pleased with her basketball performance, there were a couple of non-basketball-related issues that confused and disturbed Julie. One was the fact that the returning players constantly called Julie and the other first year players "rookies" rather than by their names. Julie also could not understand why, at the end of practice, the first-year players were ordered by the returning players to pick up all the basketball practice equipment and put it away.

Captains practices continued over the next two weeks and the returning players were still berating the first-year players by referring to them as rookies and making them pick up equipment. One day the returning players on the team told Julie and the other first-year players that they would be required to go through an initiation. The first-year players obeyed the orders and met the returning players at the center of campus at noon on Saturday. The returning players, led by the captains, were waiting with smiles on their faces as the first-year players arrived.

They then told the first-year players they were going on a scavenger hunt and, in preparation for the hunt, ordered them to dress in costumes. Even though the first-year players were embarrassed and knew they would be humiliated, they acquiesced to the demands.

As the captains handed out the list of items to be found, the first-year players began to hunt for the items. Julie and the other girls were not happy about the way things were going, but felt like they had to go along with the scavenger hunt since it was explained as part of the women's basketball tradition. The girls searched endlessly and somewhat fearfully since they were told that if they did not come back with every single item on the list they would be punished. Exhausted, Julie and the other girls found all of the items and made their way back to the center of campus to meet the captains. The captains were standing beside their cars waiting with duct tape. One by one, the captains taped the first-year players' mouths shut and put them in the trunks of their cars. Julie knew this was wrong but went along with it since she, like the other girls, was too tired, mentally and physically, to even consider resisting.

Approximately 30 minutes later, they arrived at the home of one of the captains and were led inside, where they were forced to drink shots of tequila every 10 minutes. The returning players continued calling them rookies and again explained that since it was tradition, they had to go along with it. Once the first-year players were intoxicated, they were put in front of the boy's basketball team and told they had to take their clothes off and dance for the boys. Julie knew that this was completely wrong but went along with the others because she no longer had the willpower to resist.

After that terrible night, Julie spent most of the next by herself, crying and feeling a sense of helplessness. She was unsure what to do, but also felt a sense of closeness with the other girls who had been subjected to the hazing. As difficult as it was, Julie decided to go to the next day's practice. Upon their arrival, the captains instructed Julie and the other first-year players not to talk about what had happened.

Critical Thinking: Finding Common-Sense Solutions

- 1.** As the head coach, would you have allowed the captains to conduct pre-season practices without your presence? Explain your answer.
- 2.** As the head coach, would you have allowed your returning players to refer to your first-year players as rookies? Why or why not?
- 3.** Do you believe this was an incident of hazing or initiation? Explain your answer.
- 4.** If you were one of the first-year players, would you have notified your coach of this situation?
- 5.** If you were one of the first-year players, would you have gone to the police? Why or why not?

6. Do you believe that Julie and the other first-year players will gain anything positive from this experience? If so, explain how. Do you believe they will suffer in any way from the experience? If so, how?
7. If you were the coach or athletic director and Julie came to you with the entire story, what actions, if any, would you take?

Critical Thinking: Moral Theory-Based Decision Making

8. As the athletic director, do you believe these actions *betrayed the integrity of the sport* in any way? Explain your answer. Do you believe these actions *fostered the morality of the sport* in any way? Explain your answer.
9. If you were one of the returning players on the team and were basing your actions on *deontological theory*, how would you have reacted to the treatment of the first-year players?
10. As the coach of this team, do you believe the actions of the returning players toward the first-year players were in the *best interest* of the team? The returning players? The first-year players? The opposing teams? The fans? The athletic department?

Football Hazing Death

It was just another early Sunday morning at Pineville University for head football coach, Coach Flash, as he sat in his office breaking down game film after a Saturday night victory. Coach Flash's heart jumped when his phone rang at 2:00 a.m. He picked up the phone and listened nervously as the voice on the other end introduced himself as the Pineville chief of police, Chief Blunt. Chief Blunt informed the coach that the traditional rookie party the previous night had ended in the death of his top two recruits, Eddy, a running back, and CJ, a cornerback. The cause of death was alcohol poisoning.

Chief Blunt informed Coach Flat that his three senior captains, who had been at the party, were being held at the local jail. Quenten, Lionel, and Ron all lived in the house (known informally as the Football House) where this year's rookie party took place. The three captains took responsibility for throwing the party and for organizing the deadly drinking games. The rookie party was known as a type of initiation to formally welcome all the new players into the football program. A central element and tradition of rookie parties always included an evening filled with drinking games, in which large amounts of alcohol were consumed in a short amount of time. At last night's party, new players were involved

in a contest to see who could be the first person to finish an entire bottle of vodka. To the delight and cheers of those at the party, both Eddy and CJ guzzled an entire 750-mL bottle without taking a breath. Little did anyone know that this would be the last night that Eddy and CJ would ever breathe again; both were dead a few hours later from alcohol poisoning.

The tragic deaths of these two young players has shattered not only personal lives but also professional lives. As a highly successful coach at Pineville for the past 11 years, Coach Flash was expecting this year to be his best year ever. The coach was quoted back in August during a two-a-day practice session as saying, "Given our talent-laden freshmen class along with our senior leadership, we should make a run for a national championship this year." Also in serious question now are the careers of the three captains. Quenten and Ron had been contacted by professional scouts and both have aspirations of playing professionally at the quarterback and running back positions, respectively. With a 4.0 grade-point average, Lionel still has aspirations to attend medical school.

The local media have received early word that the city prosecutor's office will press charges against the three seniors for the deaths of Eddy and CJ. Instrumental in deciding the athletic fate of these three players is Pineville's current athletics director of 10 years and former football coach of 15 years, Mr. Jones. Coach Flash is in the unique position in that he may also play a role in determining the fate of his three senior captains, yet others, including Mr. Jones, will determine his fate as the head coach at Pineville.

Critical Thinking: Finding Common-Sense Solutions

1. If you were Mr. Jones, what punishments, if any, would you mete out to the three captains who were responsible for the drinking initiations at the rookie party?
2. If you were Coach Flash, would you take accountability for Eddy and CJ's deaths by submitting your resignation? Why or why not?
3. If you were Coach Flash and were required to provide examples of positive initiation rituals, what would you provide? How would you make the distinction between acceptable initiation rituals and unacceptable (hazing) rituals?
4. Who, ultimately, should be held accountable for Eddy's and CJ's deaths, and why?
5. If you were Mr. Jones, what would you have done to try and prevent the events that led to the deaths of Eddy and CJ? What would you have done if you were Coach Flash? If you were the parents of Eddy or CJ?

Critical Thinking: Moral Theory-Based Decision Making

6. If you were Mr. Jones and you were using *teleological moral theory* to guide your reasoning, what values would you rely on in determining your actions, or lack thereof, toward Coach Flash and the three team captains?

7. If you were Coach Flash, explain how you might use *consequentialist moral theory* to create policies that would prevent an incident such as this one from occurring again.
8. If you were Coach Flash, explain how you might use *deontological moral theory* to create policies that would prevent an incident such as this one from occurring again.

Mascot Violence

Oceanfront High School's men's basketball team hosted its annual home game versus city and conference rival, Beach High School. Each year, the gym at Oceanfront is filled to capacity with students, parents, and members of the community, and this year was no exception. Unfortunately, however, this game was marred by a violent incident that made it different from past games. The game was in the second half, with Oceanfront working to maintain a 4-point lead. On the visitor's side of the gym, the Beach High mascot (a student dressed as a crab) was trying to rally the team's fans. On a dare, two Oceanfront students walked over to the opponent's section down on the floor and began to verbally torment the crab. After a minute or two of this, the two young men pushed the mascot to the ground and began beating on him to the delight of the Oceanfront crowd. Police officers responded quickly, grabbing the two students and removing them from the gym before any further violence erupted. The students were escorted out of the school and taken to the local police station, where they were held for aggravated assault. Ultimately, however, no charges were pressed against the students and they were set free later that evening.

As respected school officials, Oceanfront principal Albert and athletic director Berrant were expected to address this situation on an administrative level. The two boys had nearly incited a riot with their actions, and although no one had been seriously injured, the two administrators knew that they were fortunate that no other violence had resulted from the students' shenanigans. Further complicating matters was the fact that one of the young men, Matt, was a member of Oceanfront's highly ranked and respected men's soccer team. Although this team was not in its season, athletic director Berrant was faced with a dilemma. Should Matt be suspended for part of the next soccer season as part of his punishment for his actions? Should he be suspended from off-season training and conditioning programs and banned from the use of training facilities? Or should his punishment not be related to his athletic participation?

Critical Thinking: Finding Common-Sense Solutions

1. What aspects of this incident should be considered when determining the actions to take against the two students involved in the assault on Beach High's mascot? Explain your answer.
2. What steps should athletic director Berrant take to ensure that an incident like this does not happen again?

Critical Thinking: Moral Theory-Based Decision Making

3. Should principal Albert suspend the two students for attacking the Beach High mascot? Justify your reasoning by referring to moral principles and values relevant to the situation.
4. Under what conditions, if any, is it ethical to suspend a student athlete for part of his or her season for actions occurring during the off-season? Justify your reasoning by referring to relevant moral principles and values.
5. Should athletic director Berrant punish Matt, the soccer player, for his part in the attack? If so, what punishment should be imposed on Matt? Justify your answer.

Key Terms

aggression—behavior intended to cause psychological or physical pain or harm.

cathartic aggression—in sport, the release of violence or hostility while participating in sport.

competitive objectives of sport—goals within competitive sport that are formally established and known by all; for example, gaining yardage, tackling, and scoring are three competitive objectives in the game of football; teams that are the most effective in attaining the competitive goals of sport usually achieve victory.

Hazing Prohibition Act of 2003—the United State's first piece of proposed federal anti-hazing legislation introduced by Rep. Diane Watson (D-CA) on March 11, 2003.

in-game violence (sport violence)—within sporting contests, unjust or unwarranted exertion of intense physical force, often resulting in injury.

peripheral violence—violence resulting from sport by those other than sport participants during the game. Violence by fans and hazing are examples of peripheral violence.

post-game rioting—violent disorder by people following a sporting contest; post-game rioting by fans sometimes occurs after their team wins a championship.

team culture—the general ways of living that are associated with sports teams; team cultures may influence athletes to commit acts of violence outside of sport.