

## MORE THAN A GAME

NENAD ZIVANOVIC<sup>1</sup>, NEBOJSA RANDJELOVIC<sup>1</sup>, VEROLJUB STANKOVIC<sup>2</sup>, DANICA PIRSL<sup>1</sup>

University of Nis, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, Nis, SERBIA

University of Pristina, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, Leposavic, SERBIA

### ABSTRACT

Among other Man's activities a game can be considered a great gift bestowed on him by God Almighty. This activity, that we simply call a *game*, enables him regardless of his age to fill in his "spare time".

Time is obviously "all encompassing form of our lives" (Smeman, 195). For we always live within time boundaries and try as we might we can not escape our time. We can not escape the dawn or spring heralding nor the end of our time. And Man thus weakens most scared of the end of his time. That is why he among other things got a *game* as a present to fill in "his time". But not for ever, just for a short time until he matures as a personality when he will be able to think about the sacredness of his time.

Thus a *game* is seen as a spontaneous activity, an urge which is pleasant, in physical culture almost always dynamic. Because of these characteristics and reflecting on its essence this Man's activity is his blessed activity. And using this blessedness is a real heroic act directed at the salvation of his personality.

### Introduction

1. This term *a game* contains a lot of different conceptual nuances. The same goes for the terms such as sport, culture, civilization, metaphysics... Anyway, that is the case with all the complex concepts. Looking at the game from different angles it will always reveal something new to discuss and add to it. It is possible to consider a game as a symbol of the world and a phenomenon of the Man's existence (E.Fink), or to attribute to it a power to determine Man as a playing being (J.Hewising), or that a Man is really a Man only when he is playing (F. Schiller), or that a Man picks all the game's charms from its depths and heights and chooses either to compete, to get fascinated, to imitate or to get drifted by the stream (R. Kajoa).

In physical culture a game is also a point of interest and numerous experts have dealt on this topic and published extensively. Many a theoretician has perceived a possibility, as was the case of North America in the first half of the 20th century, to base the whole system of physical education on the game. At that time concept of physical education in Europe stemmed in gymnastics. Only the British made an exception and based the physical education on sport. In theory of physical culture for the sake of easier analysis and understanding of this activity games were originally divided into elementary and sports games depending on their complexity, but some other classification criteria were used as well.

But the main focus of this paper are sports games, more precisely football.<sup>1</sup> We narrowed it

down to a footballer and his hand used in this game. Because his manner of hand playing has fulfilled "its time". That was the game in a sports game where the strict rules forbid such manner of *hand playing*. That football game which is said to be *the most important trifle thing in the world*, or almost the whole world, revealed all its complexities. That one hand playing has unveiled foremost its socio-psychological dimension. For that hand playing of one famous footballer (T.Henry) taking place in specific football circumstances and in front of the enormous audience of the TV viewers worldwide, considering the very circumstances this hand playing happened was not the "common" game. That was the **game of the games**.

This syntagma *sports game*<sup>2</sup>, defining the term is composed of two main words – an entry *game* and an entry (determinative) *sports* that more precisely determines the meaning of the main word.

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sports games. Sports games include football, basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, rugby, golf, bowling.

<sup>2</sup> 1. Sports game is a common name in competing where one of the requisites used is a ball, small ball, stick, full shots, etc. They are divided into individual sports games (single or pair games in badminton, golf, table tennis, tennis, etc.) and team sports games (ice hockey, grass hockey, basketball, football, volleyball, handball, rugby, water polo, etc.) (Sports lexicon)

2. Sports games originated from the elementary games that over time got their hard and fast standard rules and organization with strict role of the players. They are divided into collective, team games (football, basketball, handball, volleyball, water polo, ice hockey) and individual that is those having individuals as competitors either single or in pairs (badminton, table tennis, tennis). All of them contain the elements of sport because great physio-physical exertion of each individual is manifested, in collective matches between the two teams and in individual between two persons or two pairs of persons with the aim to win. (Janko Leskosek)

<sup>1</sup> In classifying sport by combined criteria one recognizes : athletics sports, gymnastics sports, martial art sports, nautical sports, team sports, equestrian sports, cycling sports, aerial sports and of course,

Both words belong to the category of the complex concepts.

Thus a *game* was said to be a spontaneous activity, an urge which is always pleasant (while it lasts as a game). In physical culture a game is almost always a dynamic activity. Its features are freedom of acting and a possibility to express skills and creativity in the organization of the game and also a freedom to create its rules.<sup>3</sup> A game fosters perseverance, joy but also spite, outwitting and a wish to incorporate varied motor activities. A game is never organized for the sake of the results but for the emotions that are aroused during its course. And it goes without saying that it is not a working activity.

Sport as well as the game can be defined in various ways.<sup>4</sup> But no matter how we define it sport is always based on agonistics which means that victory, i.e. result is of the prime interest. But even the first civilizations<sup>5</sup> can boast of the forms of professional sport that made equations between sport and working activity. Thus sport started losing a component of joy and amusement and got closer to the classical and more cruel working reality.

William Shakespear considered sport at the end of 16th and the beginning of 17 century a kind of game, sporting and pastime because that was the time when sport was a substitute for work for the feuds

<sup>3</sup> Freely creation of the game rules at the same time means sticking to thus created rules.

<sup>4</sup> Here are some definitions of sport:

1. *Sports: All kinds of bodily exercises, games of skills or strength, horse racing, water games, horse and dog hunting, gymnastics, fencing, autoracing... (Dictionary of the French Academy)*
2. *"Each type of the bodily exercises or activity meant to do an action based on the theory of fighting some element: distance, time, obstacle, material obstacles, danger, animals, opponent, and above all oneself". (Herbert Eber)*
3. *Sport is a form of bodily exercise determined by the obtained score of the individual or the team on the basis of some evaluation of the performance". (Sports Council UNESCO-)*
4. *"Sport is a voluntary and usual cult of the intensive muscle exercise based on a wish to advance even to the hazard ".(Pierre de Couberten)*
5. *"The notion of sport worldwide and locally means physical activities (exercising) of a pleasant, dynamic and specifically agonistic characteristic".(Encyclopedica of physical culture )*
6. *Sport is organized system of bodily exercise, of the agonistic character, aspiring to perfect the personality so as to reach maximal sports results".(Nenad Zivanovic)*

<sup>5</sup> In the ancient Egyptian civilization professional athletes were: wrestlers, acrobats, stick fighters and dancers. Later on in the Old Age professionals were traced as well. In Cretomeric culture these were bull fighters, in Greeks in the period of the destruction of the Olympics some of the participants of the OG, in the Romans chariot drivers in the Circus games.

spanning between the old-fashioned beliefs and the new era demands imposed on them.

But with the emergence of the civil sport during 18th and 19th century sport loses this joyful characteristics. Sports results are more used to reach some aims, mostly political and economic ones. The same holds true nowadays and it is so obvious. Although today's sports are wrapped in patriotic layers of different colours depending on the current situation cruel professionalism of sport can not be hidden.

So the attributes of sport long moulded and perfected during the centuries such as health, socialization, and amateurism have changed in the 20th century and today only professionalism and profit count. All complying to the spirit of the modern times we live in where everything has its own price and has to be paid.

In the long run and quite expectedly sport is now devoid of game. And *sport without game* is not just the title of the good book (Kokovic, 1986) but reflects our current times. This cruel reality was recognized by the world when only a few decades ago the Olympic motto – it is important to participate, was annihilated.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the North American continent at the moment of liberal capitalism aspiring to Man's fall promoted in blaze and shine a new motto –it is important to win, only to burn and outshine the old one. And so sport was left without game and without its essential attributes that in sport took Man as a personality– one and only and unique.

2. During a football match between the selections of France and Ireland in the qualifications for the World Championship,<sup>7</sup> Thierry Henry, French player held the ball with his hands to prevent it to go out of the playing court, passed the ball to his playmate and scored a goal. That was a draw goal for the French that took them to the finals of the World Championship.

Of course, the Irish players protested, a million of TV viewers saw the handball incident thanks to the TV cameras that have recorded this "hand playing". Everybody saw, everybody but the referees that Thierry Henry held the ball with his hand. On the previous oversight, on the irregular position of the French footballer nobody wanted to comment.

<sup>6</sup> "Comforting" motto "it is not important to win but to take part ", which is quite by mistake attributed to Pierre de Couberten is the "authorship " of a clergyman at a mass organized for the Olympics participants in London in 1908 uttered by the Pensilvanian archbishop Etelbert Talbott.

*Also the famous saying Citius, altius, fortius! (Faster, higher, stronger!)is a message of Henrie Didone, a French priestman.*

<sup>7</sup> Second match for the 2010 Football World Championship took place in Paris on 18th November , 2009. French needed draw result. This goal was scored in the last minutes of the match.

Because hand playing was a hot issue of the protest and later on of the debate. The press mused on it, TV discussions were organized, football and layman audience pondered it. The Irish were angry, they begged, threatened. But nothing happened. The referee's decision was obeyed because his decision like the emperor's is not to be disputed. Especially, when the problem in question is the problem of the "big and important" and the "small and insignificant".

Explanations given were in accordance with the times we live in where all means serve the final end. You could hear and read the explanations conveying the same message: it is true, it was an offense and illegal game but since the referee did not see the offense at that very moment everything is perfectly all right. Anyway footballers always simulate and try to use illegal means to win. So hand playing is an offense that does not differ from the foul or simulation.

If ethics means "personal applications of a certain set of values that an individual has acquired to realize the objective set by himself and considered correct" (Kokovic, 2004, 129), and it is considered correct, than one should not be surprised with this decision. Because the individual can take his decisions about what is wrong and right for him so can the State which enacts its laws that regulate what is to be respected. That is how we reach the formula: "Ethics is first of all a personal matter, a law is first of all a matter of the society" (Ethwel & Anderson, 2001, 392).

The same way the state passes its laws, that is the prescribed regulations that each individual should comply with so the sports associations, in this case football one, generate the rules of the football (sports) game. And these rules must be obeyed. Therefore the task of the football referees is to try to make all : footballers, experts, audience to respect and obey the rectified rules.

This case again confirms time and again the fact that footballers are assigned to win – at any cost, meaning they can use all allowed and illegal means, and the referees that is, institutions are given a task to allow that victory only if the prescribed rules of the game are obeyed.

Generally, this means that all means are allowed- in a great desire to realize the set objective, in this case a football victory, and referees, that is institutions are given a task to prevent lies, theft, simulation. If this is not prevented then a victory is declared, the objective is reached, though it is obvious that it is realized by the breaking of the fixed rules, that is laws.<sup>8</sup> This "delocalization" (Milanovic,

2009) of the respect for the ethical norms from the individual to the institutions foresees the fall of the Man and the rise of the institutions.

And since these institutions are made up of the individuals that do not have to respect enacted and adopted ethical norms – *until caught*, it is hard to expect such institutions, i.e. the State to be able to defend at all times adopted norms of behaviour.<sup>9</sup> Assumption that a social theory is a good one but that individuals (within us) are bad obviously is not a valid one. The football example as well as the daily published examples in the media set by the politicians in all spheres of life discuss the fallacy of such a concept of the society. It must be noted – that this strikingly resembles the old Roman culture when the *gladiators and circus games* were in full swing. And when the Juvenals motto "*Panem et circenses*" was a guideline for the establishment of the Roman state.

If we constantly nurture not only in sport but in sports games and other spheres of social life as well, this idea that says "bread and games" are sufficient and that "everything is allowed", then one should not wonder our "*messing with our own culture*" (Zunic, 2009).

Our "game" has obviously trespassed the limits and has become too "*playfull*".

3.In this playfulness and playing with us football sports game has once more proved and the play of Henry's hand has undoubtedly shown, that what happened was not the exception but the rule itself. From the hand play in Paris to the foot play in international institutions that determine the destiny of the world there are no differences. This equation - from the Wallstreet to pyramid financial inventions to Paris, all this shows that the notion of ethics and its governing rules can be – and really are lethal for the humankind.

Politics and those deciding on the destiny of the world have transformed football into the "political sport". And ""political sport" has fabricated "serious sport", that is sport without game in which for its new attributes -

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state or the institutions it is evident that the picture on ethical norms is crooked one. And it is evident that they are to be obeyed only by institutions which leads directly to the destruction of the essential civilization values.

<sup>9</sup> Recently (at the beginning of 2010), unfortunately for all the actors in this sad game absurdness of such a view of the ethics and law was shown. Namely, using the official car of the Assembly for private purposes both a secretary and a driver have committed a serious crime and caused a bad crash but their offence was greater in a moral sense. Because of their arrogance they were detected but if there were not such a behavior people would not find out that they used official car for the private affairs. And this offense was made by people working in the highest state institution. So, the breakers of the adopted norms or the thieves are real thieves only when get caught.

<sup>8</sup> In a society that allows everything to an individual and where everybody steals and the thief is the one caught red-handed by the

professionalism and profit usual qualities are: hatred, to a playmate, and even bigger one to an opponent, jealousy, envy, gladness for someone other's pain and misfortune and violence. Thus this *sports game* has become an example to follow in other spheres of social life as well. This becomes a matrix of desirable social conduct.

This matrix shows that ethics has been stripped of love. Such an ethics without love and let us remind that God is Love, is an evil that will stray the humankind into the selfdestruction. Contrary to the generally accepted ethics without love Christian anthropology state that " ethics is not ethics of the mind but the ethics of the deeds."<sup>10</sup> (Spektorsky, 1992). Christian ethics says that Man is to be approached with peagent legs because Man created to an image of God is meant to keep and not spoil it. At the same time Man is entitled to keep and multiply all the gifts and talents bestowed on him by his Creator<sup>11</sup>. This task to keep and preserve the talents only a personality – one and unique.

If Thierry Henry after hand playing and short joy just as children do in similar situations, had admitted that he had played with his hand and thus helped a referee who had not seen this breach of rules to change his decision and declare scored goal invalid, he would certainly had shown that he had a personality and was not just an individual. He would have shown that he was not a tiny atom or just a pin in the hay but a selfcontained cosmos belonging to spiritual and ethical category. Because "man is not a number, for he is bigger than the multitude" (Bergaev: according to Markovic, 1996, 24).

But Thierry Henry did not act this way. Educated that realization of the objective is the most decisive part he took sides and showed which rules of conduct were "useful ". Soaring towards the sky and becoming " universal star " he had thus justified the money invested into his rising.

So this hand playing at that particular moment and that particular place has once again shown the true picture of *time* of our fallen world. It has also shown generally accepted idea of life where everything is allowed although not all is not to our advantage. (Ap. Paul).

And this idea verified as the axiom of the modern world does not care for the generations to come and to judge our deeds – justified by the fact that we will all be deceased when our deeds would be questioned.

It is of no use to tell a story, morale or the reminding that there appeared someone above death

and yet within our time (Smeman, 1992, 197). Someone who has resurrected and given a sense to our living is of no use because today our time takes some other course towards death and nothingness; towards the "games above games " where any set objective justifies the applied means and even public scheme performed in front of the millions of people. Thus we confront numerously the imposed ideology of the western civilization - *all for profit and profit for nothing*.

All this is in the spirit of the Horatio's message "*Carpe diem*".

But if instead of nihilism as the basic to the theology of absence we accept **Love** – as the basis of the Christian theology, then this "game " of hand will be a game with the full meaning of the word. We will again see Man's personality– which is unique and unrepeatable. We shall endeavour to respect and be careful not to hurt anyone. In a word *we shall try to be humans*

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<sup>10</sup> "My beloved, do not love each other by words but by deeds and truth " (Rome . 2,21)

<sup>11</sup> "... and masses are different but only one is God ' (I Cor.op. 12,5)