

Ethics4Sports - An ERASMUS+ co-funded project surrounding perceptions of fairness in grassroots sport.

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Recent Progress on the E4S Project

We want to report on recent activities in relation to the E4S project on ethics and fairness in sport. There has been a lot of work going on!

Since we last reported, the E4S group have met again, this time in the United Kingdom. The University of Leicester in the East Midlands hosted the steering committee meeting in late April.

A key aim of the project has been the discussion of role models and ethics in professional sport and the collection of qualitative and quantitative data in relation to young player behaviour in grassroots sport. We also want to produce an App and a viable code of ethics for local sport. Here we want to report on just three aspects of our recent activities.

1. European Survey of Behaviour in Grassroots

Sport

In pursuit of our work on the Identification of good practice in local sport across Europe, qualitative data were obtained through interviews with parents, coaches, players, staff, volunteers and they provide interesting discussion points.

Similarly, quantitative data were obtained through use of a questionnaire with players from the various partner clubs, concerning anti-social and pro-social behaviours. Here again some results deserve reflection.

On matters of awareness and training, the partners were able to explain what is already set up within their own structures to inform and train the various stakeholders on the issue of fair play and ethics. These themes are developed in this newsletter more precisely below.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A survey was conducted involving 306 players from the project's partner clubs. This included questions

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- Pro-social behaviour (i.e. fair-play behaviour) and anti-social behaviour (i.e., behaviour contrary to rules, deviant behaviours) that the players declared they had committed since the beginning of the season.

These behaviours may be against the referee, opponents or partners.

- The pro-social and anti-social behaviour they perceived in their coaches or their opponents, against the referee, the opponents, or their teammates.

- The values young people develop in sporting practice (moral values, competence values, status-related values).

As regards the sports values declared by the players (scale of 1 to 5), the results show in particular that:

- Male players value status more than female players.
- The level of sporting practice also has a significant influence on the status-related value. For example, national level players (3.41) value status more than ones of county level play (3.07) and more than players at local level (2.77).
- The number of years of practice seem to be an inhibitory element in relation to moral values in sport: the emphasis on moral values decreases as the number of years of playing sport increases. More experience produces more willingness to anti-social behaviour

In terms of behaviour more generally, the main results show that:

- Boys report more anti-social behaviour than girls, especially against the referee or officials. There is no significant difference for pro-social behaviour.
- Anti-social behaviour is also more frequent s competition increases at the national level (2.18) than at the county level (1.89), and at the local level (1.78). These anti-social behaviours are directed more towards the referee or opponents than team-mates.
- Coaches are more likely to be perceived as demonstrating anti-social behaviour at the national level (2.53) than at county level (2.20) and at local level (1.83). This difference relates, in particular, to the behaviour towards the referee or officials (3.22 vs 2.71 & 2.12).
- The number of years of practice is a factor that encourages the development of anti-social behaviour: the negative behaviour declared by players increases as the number of years of practice increases. There is no significant effect on pro-social behaviour.

All this suggests that more experience and increased levels of competition in sport produces more willingness to bend the rules or pressure officials. It should also be noted that the pro-social behaviour perceived among coaches is a rather good predictor of the pro-social behaviour declared by the players, especially in relation to behaviour towards referees. Anti-social behaviour declared by players is predicted by the anti-social behaviour perceived in their coaches, especially in relation to negative behaviour towards the referee and against opponents.

Finally, and perhaps predictably, the more players develop weak moral values, and high-status values, the

2. Developing the E4S Ethics Code for Grassroots Sport

E4S has been working on producing a generic code for promoting ethical behaviour in grassroots sporting practice across Europe. Our detailed discussions and analyses has allowed us to identify some core themes or structures of what might be a common ethical code for use in local sport. These themes summarise the values that are primarily identified as structuring ethical behaviour in grassroots sporting contexts. These common sporting values we have organized around four general axes:

- **Respect:** This value deals with all the rules or laws involved in sporting activity (social rules; institutional rules; rules of the game, etc.) and a commitment to others that each participant has to uphold the rules and contribute to the generally harmonious development of the life of the community through sport
- **Team spirit and solidarity:** This value accepts both the weaknesses and strengths of each participant, but promotes in team sport the collective and positive group motivation over individualism
- **Responsibility:** This value insists on individuals taking responsibility for their own behaviour towards team-mates, opponents and officials
- **Mindset:** This value demands that, as well as showing confidence in their own and other's sporting abilities, all participants also demonstrate a suitable humility and modesty in their sporting activities and behaviour

Each of these values can be used to promote pro-social behaviour in local sporting contexts and can work to regulate and control anti-social or unsporting behaviour. The combination of the various ethical codes initially presented by each E4S partner means that we can demonstrate that these ethical principles apply not only to athletes, but they also concern all the people involved in the relationship with athletes: namely coaches, sports leaders, volunteers and parents.

All these people contribute to the moral development of young people through sport; they are their main

VALUES	KEY ACTORS & PRINCIPLES		
	ATHLETES	STAFF	PARENTS
1. RESPECT	1.1.A- <i>Respect the institutional rules</i> (Rules of the club; decisions of the officials; instructions of coaches, etc.)	1.1.S- <i>Respect the institutional rules</i> (Rules of the club; federation rules; rules of other clubs, etc.)	1.1.P- <i>Respect the institutional rules</i> (Rules of the club; decisions of the referees; instructions of coaches, etc.)
	1.2.A- <i>Respect the facilities and equipment provided</i>	1.2.S- <i>Respect the facilities and equipment provided</i>	1.2.P- <i>Respect the facilities and equipment provided</i>
	1.3.A- <i>Respect the social rules</i> (No discrimination; no negative judgments of others; no insults for opponents, etc.)	1.3.S- <i>Respect the social rules</i> (Deal equally with everyone; no discrimination; show respect for opponents, etc.)	1.3.P- <i>Respect the social rules</i> (No discrimination; show respect for opponents and their supporters; no insults etc.)
	1.4.A- <i>Respect the rules/laws of the game</i> (Do not cheat; do not hurt opponents or others; respect the rules which structure your sport, etc.)	1.4.S- <i>Respect the rules/laws of the game</i> (Do not encourage athletes to cheat; do not encourage them to hurt opponents or others; or challenge the rules, etc.)	1.4.P- <i>Respect the rules/laws of the game</i> (Do not encourage athletes to cheat; do not encourage them to hurt opponents or others; or challenge the rules, etc.)

Figure 1: Operationalizing the E4S Model for Grassroots Sport: The Core Value of ‘Respect’

An example of this is the value concerning ‘Respect’ (see Figure 1). Here we apply it to all those involved in the production of local sport. We are working hard on completing our model of an easily understandable but comprehensive ethics code for grassroots sports clubs in Europe. In our next E4S Newsletter we will report on our progress in this respect.

3. International Panel Event: *Is Sport Fair?*

A particular highlight of the recent E4S three- day meeting in Leicester was our hosting of an international seminar entitled ‘*Is Sport Fair?*’ The aim of the seminar was to explore ethical questions in sport with people directly involved in the sports business (See Figure 2).

This event was open to the public, as well as being a feature of the E4S stay in Leicester. The panel was formed of local elite sporting professionals from the fields of: rugby union (George Shuter, ex-England & Leicester Tigers), cricket (Wasim Khan, ex-player and now CEO at Leicestershire CCC) and professional basketball (Rob Paternostro, Head Coach of Leicester Riders; Sussie Maguire ex-Swedish basketball international). We also had the services of Arun Kang, CEO of Sporting Equals, who could talk about the ways in which young people respond to the behaviour of sports stars.

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Do professionals operate from a different ethical code?

John Williams from E4S chaired the event and asked questions of the panel, before members of the public and the E4S group joined in. The sporting professionals were asked whether a different ethical code operated in professional sport compared to that in local sport. Most panel members agreed that it did; that professionals necessarily played 'to the limit' - and sometimes over it. But a line was also drawn between gamesmanship, cleverly gaining competitive advantage, and outright cheating among professionals, event.



International Seminar

Is Sport Fair?

Thursday 20 April 2017, 6-7.30pm



Is there a 'crisis' in professional sport today over accusations that cheating is rife and that sport offers too few positive role models for young people? It is also argued that parents and players are making life intolerable for officials in local sport. But are such concerns justified? Should we expect the same behaviour from professionals and amateurs, and is 'bending the rules' more acceptable in some sports than others?

Our panel of experts for this exciting event includes: Matt Elliott (ex-Leicester City), Wasim Khan (CEO, Leicestershire CCC), George Shuter (ex-Leicester Tigers & England rugby), Rob Paternostro (coach, Leicester Riders), Joslyn Hoyte-Smith (ex-Olympic 400 metre runner) and Arun Kang (Sporting Equals).

This is a **FREE EVENT** organised under the European ERASMUS programme. If you have an interest in sport as a player, organiser, official or fan, then this is something you will not want to miss.

To register go to www.le.ac.uk/dice - or turn up on the night.

VENUE

Ken Edwards Lecture Theatre 2



Figure 2: E4S seminar *Is Sport Fair?* poster

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Coach Rob Paternostro, as an American working in sport in Europe, was quite surprised that this discussion about the role of ‘fairness’ in professional sport was taking place at all: for him it was axiomatic that professionals operated by different standards to recreational sports players. But he also pointed out that gaining a reputation for cheating was, in the long run, against the interests of any professional sports club. He wanted his teams to do everything they could to win, but he claimed never to have instructed his players directly to go out to cheat.

Are sporting professionals suitable role models for young people?

We had a lengthy discussion about professionals in sport as role models. Should we hold them up as key people that children might try to emulate? The panel broadly thought that sports professionals should not be seen in this way. This was because of the pressures they experienced always to win: professionals sometimes have to bend the rules because they have a ‘moral’ commitment to team-mates, and their families and fans,

But Arun Kang from Sporting Equals, someone who works with young people in local sport, insisted that sports professionals do need to recognise that even if they, themselves, do not accept their status as role models, many young people will continue to see them in this way. This means that sports professionals must try to build this realisation into their behavioural codes.

Ethics, betting and sport

Wasim Khan pointed out that professionals in sport will constantly seek out advantage over their rivals: they will try to find loopholes in the rules and laws of sport as part of a professional ethic to give them the edge over competitors.

He also argued that some betting patterns around spot fixing in cricket might seem quite benign: placing bets on small aspects of the game might seem to have few consequences. But he also pointed out that such practices had both cultural and economic roots: sometimes, even international professional players could be coerced or tempted into spot fixing because they were offered much more money to make small actions on the field than they could ever earn from a professional career playing cricket. Poorly rewarded young Pakistani players were now often rejected by major cricket clubs as a result.

Does gender make a difference?

Our own research with young people suggested that females were less likely to be involved in anti-social sporting behaviour than males. In terms of gender in professional or elite level sport, Sussi Maguire pointed out that women’s team sport did not have the sorts of media and financial pressures which are so prominent in men’s sport today.

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4. E4S Moving on

We are continuing to develop our work and you can keep up with some of the things we have been doing by looking at this short film about the E4S group visit to Leicester. This includes coverage of a visit we made to a Leicester Riders British Basketball League fixture and of the *Is Sport Fair?* public seminar we held during the visit to the UK. We hope you like it.



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