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Tribute to Martin Lee

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BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO FAIR-PLAY IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS^(*)

1. Introduction

In professional competitive sports, every player or team tries to be superior to the opponent, following a set of written rules which define how the game has to be played. These rules have been labelled as Constitutive rules, and are accepted by every player to play fairly the competition. Moreover, there are also a second type of rules labelled Normative rules that may differ across the different sports and reflect the values' system established by players, coaches, managers and fans. Some normative rules, such as kick the ball off to help a player on the ground in a soccer match, favour fair play. However, other normative rules imply intentional violations of constitutive rules to achieve some benefits for the team, such as, in soccer, to stop an opponent in the midfield, when he has the opportunity of creating a dangerous opening. These behaviours are called "useful" or "tactical" fouls, and some sport scientists have suggested that some of rule violating behaviours, including aggressive player behaviour, are normative behaviours perceived as legitimate by participants (e.g., Silva 1981, 1983; Vaz 1979). Consequently, socialisation process in sport will legitimate rule violating behaviour in professional and youth sports, unless sports leaders modify sport rules to state that rule violating behaviour will become dysfunctional to sport success. In this chapter, contact faults, behaviours against fair play, and behaviours in favour of fair play were assessed in 24 football matches of English Premiere League (PL) and the Spanish Liga de Futbol Profesional (LFP).

Studies about violence and aggression, specially violence between spectators of a professional contact sports like football, prevailed in the eighties in Sport Psychology and Sociology as a result of serious riots produced by football hooligans (Dunning, Murphy, & Williams, 1988; Goldstein, 1983; Murphy, Williams & Dunning, 1990; Rimé & Leyens, 1988; Smith, 1983). In fact, some authors like Russell (1993) suggested that outside wartime, sport is perhaps the only setting in which acts of interpersonal aggression are not only tolerated but enthusiastically applauded by large segments of society.

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Violence in sport, both on and off the field, has come to be perceived as a social problem as Tenenbaum, Stewart, Singer and Duda (1997) have outlined in an *International Society of Sport Psychology -ISSP-* position stand about aggression and violence in sport. As a result of these trends, commissions have been created in different countries to investigate violence in the athletic setting and studies about attitudes, values and behaviours related to fair play and moral development of youth athletes have received greater attention in Sport Psychology (e.g., Bredemeier, 1994; Lee & Cokman, 1995; Shields & Bredemeier, 1994).

As Lee (1996) pointed out, the bulk of research into fair play have been attitudinal studies, (e.g., Blair 1985; Boixadós & Cruz, 1995; Case, Greer & Lacourse, 1987; Goodger & Jackson, 1985; Lee & Williams, 1989; Pilz, 1995). The results of these studies suggest that instrumental attitudes are more commonly associated with older athletes, higher level of organised sport participation, amount of physical contact and males rather than females (Pilz, 1995; Silva, 1983).

Although the value systems of sports participants are fundamental for an adequate understanding of fair play, there had been few studies about values in sport, until the research initiative of the Council of Europe and the Sports Council, coordinated by Professor Martin Lee, in the late 1980s stimulated interest in this area (Cruz, Boixadós, Valiente & Capdevila, 1995; Lee, 1993; Lee & Cokman, 1995; Lee, Whitehead & Balchin, 2000; Mielke & Bahlke, 1995; and Torregrosa & Lee, 2000). Results of the aforementioned studies provide further evidence to doubt about the positive influence that simply playing sport has in fair play, sportsmanship and character development (see Shields & Bredemeier 2001 for a review). Hence more research has to be done in the social environment in which sport is presented to young athletes in order to assess its potential for promoting desirable ethical standards.

Since youth sport is often derived from professional models, it is reasonable to assume that the behaviours of professional players would affect junior practice. So in this chapter an observational register of behaviours related to fair play in football matches is presented, in order to assess these behaviours in a sample of matches of the *Premiere League-PL-* and the *Liga de Fútbol Profesional -LFP-* (Spanish Football League).

The observational tool used in this research comes from a multidimensional definition of fair play incorporating: (a) Respect for rules, (b) Good relationships with opponents, (c) Equality of opportunities and conditions, (d) Avoidance of victory at all costs, (e) Honour in victory and defeat, and (f) personal commitment to do one's best (Boixadós & Cruz, 1995). In essence, we agree with Lee's definition of fair play as: "*particular behaviours characterised by the principle of justice for all, in which there is no attempt to gain an unfair advantage over an opponent either purposefully or fortuitously*" (Lee, 1996). According to the previous definition, we have elaborated an observational register with different behavioural categories grouped in 3 main blocks: contact faults, behaviours against fair play and behaviours in favour of fair play (see Table 1 and 2).

2. Method

2.1. Sample

Twenty-four football matches, 12 of the *Liga de Fútbol Profesional -LFP-* (Spain) and 12 of the *Premiere League -PL-* (England). The reason why the sample is composed

Football matches were recorded on video tapes and three independent observers watched them after. At the moment of behaviours' notation in the observational register tapes were stopped in order to prevent the lost of reactive behaviours.

Table 2: *Operational definition of the categories.*

Contact Faults
1. <i>Kick/trip</i> : Contact fault done with the inferior half-length, that means cause to fall or try to knock down the opponent with the legs.
2. <i>Push/Hold down</i> : Contact fault done with the superior half-length, that means to push or to hold down the opponent.
3. <i>Block</i> : To stop the opponent's run by means of length and forgetting ball's trajectory.
4. <i>Hit (with the fist, elbow, head,...)</i> : To hit the opponent during the fight to get the ball. (Different of aggression)
Behaviours against fair play
5. <i>Dangerous Play</i> : Fault done when the player try to play the ball with risk of hurt or injury for the opponent in case of contact (for ex.: to rise the leg too much, try to play the ball when is in goalkeeper's possession,...).
6. <i>Deliberate hands</i> : Fault that take place when the ball is played (touching, pushing,...) with the hand or the arm.
7. <i>Protest</i> : To show openly and repeatedly (by means of pejorative gestures, screams,...) disagreement with the referee's decision (as for presence as for absence).
8. <i>Lose time deliberately</i> : Deliberate player's behaviour with the aim of losing time, when game is stopped, in favour of his own team.
9. <i>Don't return the ball</i> : To keep ball's possession when not written but accepted by consensus rules say that the ball has to be returned to the opponent (for ex.: when the ball has been kick out to attend to a player).
10. <i>Trick</i> : All kind of behaviour done to confuse the referee's judgement (for ex.: to simulate a penalty, to ask for the ball when it seems clear that the ball is for the other team,...).
11. <i>Aggression</i> : To hit or try to hit the opponent, also spit or insult him, forgetting the ball when it is played or when the game is stopped.
12. <i>Don't accept excuses</i> : To refuse orally or by means of gestures the opponent's apologies, usually after have received a fault.
Behaviours in favour of fair play
13. <i>Accept excuses</i> : To accept orally or by means of gestures the opponent's apologies, usually after have received a fault.
14. <i>Apologise</i> : To ask for excuse to the opponent player orally or by means of gestures, generally after have committed a fault.
15. <i>Kick out the ball</i> : Kick the ball out of play when an opponent is injured.
16. <i>Return the ball</i> : To return ball's possession when not written but accepted by consensus rules say that this one has to be returned to the opponent (for ex.: when the ball has been kick out to attend to a player).
17. <i>Jump over the goalkeeper</i> : Behaviour to avoid the impact against the goalkeeper of the other team when there is a high risk of hurt or injury if the contact is produced.
18. <i>Encourage the opponent</i> : To support the opponent orally or by means of gestures, congratulate him in a case of a good play, help to him to stand up after a fault,...
Other behaviours
19. Behaviours related with fair play which have not seen clearly.
Incidences: goals, cards,...

3. Results

Figure 1 shows means of blocks of behaviours (contact faults, behaviours against and behaviours in favour of fair play) for the *LFP* and the *PL*. For each block appear more behaviours in case of *LFP* than in case of *PL*. Moreover, in all cases the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0,001$). In our sample, more contact faults, more behaviours against fair play and more behaviours in favour of fair play were observed in case of *LFP* than in case of *PL*.

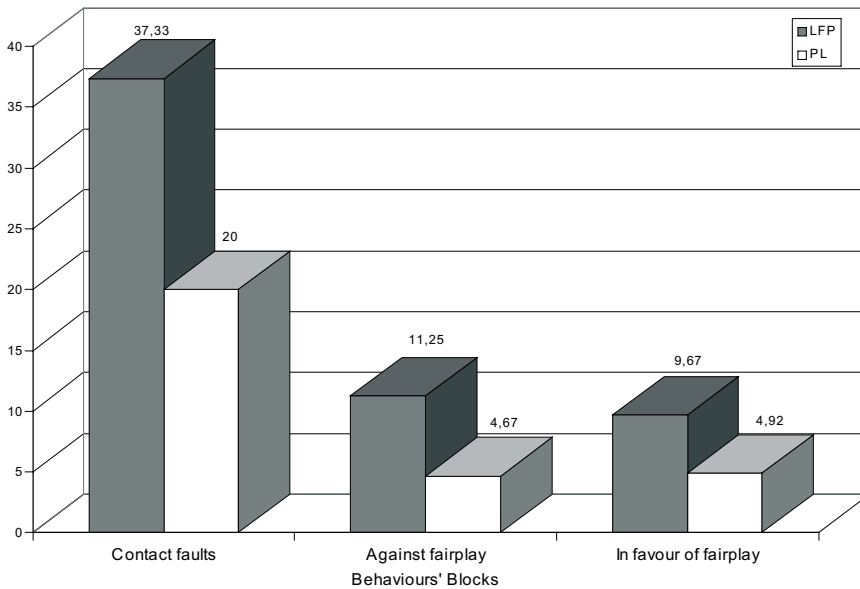


Figure 1: Means by match of behaviours blocks for the *LFP* and the *PL*.

Table 3 shows in which categories are significant the differences observed in the blocks. Behaviours grouped as contact faults (Kick, Push, Block and Hit) present all of them differences in the sense indicated by blocks of categories. That is, significant more behaviours of those categories are observed in the *LFP* than in the *PL*. Referring to behaviours against fair play, differences are centred in the categories Dangerous play ($p=0.042$), and Protest ($p < 0.001$). The means by its own are illustrative data if we take into account that in the *LFP* appears a mean of nearly 6 protests every match while in the *PL* appears less than 2. Referring to favourable to fair play behaviours, significant differences are concentrated in the categories Kick out the ball and Return the ball. These behaviours are in fact a sequence of behaviours in a fair play environment (always the first appears, appears also the second). Moreover, although

they are framed in the block of behaviours favourable to fair play, the appearance of a higher mean can not always be interpreted positively for two reasons. On the one hand, the behaviour of Kicking out the ball is produced generally when a player needs assistance, that is, usually after a fault or behaviour against fair play. On the other hand, every time that ball is off the field the game is stopped and the real time of play decreases. Therefore, there are not significant differences in the categories Jump over the goalkeeper and Encourage the opponent, those categories with less possibility of a negative antecedent.

Table 3: Means by categories of behaviours related with fair play and statistical significance of the differences

	<i>LFP</i>	<i>PL</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Kick/Trip	19.42	10.17	p<0.001
Push/Hold down	16.00	9.42	p<0.001
Block	1.33	0.33	p=0.039
Hit	0.58	0.08	p=0.008
Dangerous play	0.92	0.33	p=0.042
Deliberate hands	1.42	1.50	p=0.832
Protest	5.92	1.83	p<0.001
Lose time deliberately	1.08	0.25	p=0.090
Don't return the ball	0	0	
Trick	0.33	0.17	p=0.514
Aggression	1.50	0.58	p=0.289
Don't accept excuses	0.08	0.00	p=0.328
Accept excuses	1.08	0.50	p=0.147
Apologise	2.33	1.33	p=0.088
Kick out the ball	1.00	0.17	p=0.005
Return the ball	1.00	0.33	p=0.028
Jump over the goalkeeper	0.33	0.50	p=0.544
Encourage the opponent	3.91	2.08	p=0.097

In our research, we began also to assess the role of referees maintaining and/or promoting fair play. Table 4 shows means and statistical significance of the differences in yellow and red cards between the *LFP* and the *PL*. When differences are calculated in each league, we can see that the mean of yellow cards shown by the Spanish referees is statistically higher than the mean of yellow cards shown by the English referees ($M=6.5$ vs. $M=4$; $p=0.023$). This means that results of referees are consistent with those of the player's behaviours. Therefore, if we have found first that Spanish players make more faults and more behaviours against fair play, is consistent to find that Spanish referees shows more cards than the English ones. Referring to red cards, no significant differences between leagues were found.

Table 4: Means by match of yellow and red cards and statistical significance between both competitions.

	<i>LFP</i>	<i>PL</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Yellow Cards	6.5	4	p=0.023
Red Cards	0.58	0.25	p=0.167

The differences found in player's behaviours, suggest the possibility that apart of appearing more cards in the *LFP* the cause for showing them can be different in each league. For this reason we have analysed the cause of each card. In case of the *LFP*, 60 of the total 78 yellow cards (that is 77%) were shown after a contact fault committed by some player, and 18 yellow cards (that is the 23%) were shown as a consequence of behaviour against fair play. In case of *PL*, 37 of the 48 yellow cards (that is 77%) were shown after a contact fault committed by some player, and 11 yellow cards (that is the 23%) were shown as a consequence of behaviour against fair play. In summary, we can appreciate that significant more yellow cards are shown in the *LFP* comparing with the *PL*, but the cause of these cards is distributed equally in both leagues.

4. Discussion

Quantitative analysis of behaviours related with fair play has shown that *LFP* players have done more faults (M=37.33 vs. M=20), more behaviours against fair play (M=11.25 vs. M=4.67) and more behaviours in favour of fair play (M=9.67 vs. M=4.92) than *PL* players. If we consider the results of contact faults and behaviours against fair play, we could think that in *LFP* the matches are played with less fair play than in *PL*. However, considering the behaviours in favour of fair play we could conclude the opposite. How can we explain these results that seem contradictory? Does it mean that the play is rougher in *LFP* than *PL*? Or is it softer? Certainly, to answer these questions more researches are necessary but, from our point of view we adventure two possible explanations. The first one comes from our observational instrument and the second one arises from the qualitative analysis of the matches.

Due to the categorisation some of the behaviours in favour of fair play (Apologise, Kick out the ball, Return the ball) are linked with contact faults. In fact, these are the categories in which differences between *LFP* and *PL* are statistically significant. This means that with the appearance of more contact faults also appears more behaviours in favour of fair play. However, this doesn't allow us to conclude that matches in one of both competitions are played with more or less fair play. In future researches, we plan to separate behaviours in favour of fair play into 2 groups: those ones with a positive or neutral antecedent (for example Encourage the opponent) and those ones with a negative antecedent (for example Apologise after a fault).

The number of contacts between football players is basically the same in both leagues. The main difference is player's reaction after receiving the contact. Whereas in *LFP* players usually ends on the field, in *PL* players try to go on playing. This could be related with the difference between constitutive and normative rules (Silva, 1981).

Due to the fact that constitutive rules are equal for both competitions (there is only one official rules), the difference has to be in the normative rules, those ones not written but accepted by participants' consensus (players, referees, coaches and spectators). For example, it seems more accepted in the *LFP* to gain ball's possession using all kind of tricks, simulations, etc. to take advantage from the opponent. However, in the *PL* this kind of tricks or simulations are less usual. This one could be an example which, added to other differences, let us consider the existence of different 'cultures' in the world of football or different ways of understanding football in different countries.

Analysis of referees' performance is a first step to go deeper in the understanding of fair play as a global matter which depends of all participants in sportive situation (Cruz, et al., 2001; Torregrosa & Cruz, 1999). In this sense, we plan also in the future to investigate coaches, managers and media role in fair play exhibited by players in football matches and the pressure they put on referees. Results of this study show that in *Liga de Fútbol Profesional* referees admonish statistically more than in *Premiere League* (*PL*), but referees are not the unique responsible of this fact. The faults marked during a professional football match and its consequent admonitions are responsibility of players and referees. As a consequence of the major number of faults in the *LFP* than in *PL* is quite normal to find more admonitions in the Spanish league ($LFP=6,5$ vs. $PL=4$) and this difference is statistically significant. Moreover is interesting to confirm that distribution of admonishes antecedents are the same in both leagues, about 77% after a contact fault and 23% as a consequence of a behaviour against fair play.

Our results show that winning at all costs has become an essential part of modern professional sport everywhere, but results obtained from *PL* players are more favourable to fair play than those obtained in *LFP*. However, there is always room for improvement in the models offered by both leagues and some actions should be taken in the future in order to improve not only fair play and sportsmanship but also the sportive spectacle by its own. These measures will be important to ensure a better fair play in professional sport and to offer better models for youth sports.

In summary, our belief is that in professional sport, there exists a so called "informal system of norms" which allows players rule violations in the interest of success in sport. Pilz (1995) points out that rule violations are legitimated and expected by fans, so a dangerous circle, difficult to interrupt, starts. Players commits faults in the interest of winning the match. Spectators expect players commit some kind of fouls and reinforce them by making "useful or tactical" faults. Expectations of players and spectators could be different in the studied leagues depending on the differences between football's "culture".

In conclusion, two kinds of actions are needed to promote fair play and sportsmanship. First of all changes in rules in order to avoid transgressors advantage during the game. Actually, professional players don't behave according to a principle of justice for all, but they act within a simple cost-profit calculation principle. So, as long as the costs for unfair behaviour are less than the profits obtained, they will use these behaviours to attain their goals of success, as Pilz (1995), Silva (1981) and Stornes (2001) have outlined. In second place, a long term educational measures for all the participants (players, coaches, referees, managers, etc.) in youth football -such as those summarised in different codes of sports ethics- have to be initiated (e.g., Borrás, 2004). These two kinds of measures are necessary to prevent the increase of utilitarian behaviours in

top level football players and the imitation of negative models in youth sports, due to the influence that significant others have in the shaping of the moral atmosphere of youth sport teams, as have been outlined by different research teams (Boixadós, Cruz, Torregrosa, & Valiente 2004; Guivernau and Duda ,2002; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre & Treasure, 2003; Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi & Power (2005), Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996).

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