

## Keeping High the True Values of Sport

I am writing this Editorial the day after the night before! Last night more than 100 million spectators around the globe witnessed a fantastic performance demonstrating that anything is possible in sports! In a historic comeback the New England Patriots won the 51st NFL Super Bowl. It was historic for various reasons: It was the biggest comeback, catching up a 25-point deficit; for the first time in a Super Bowl extra time was needed to come up with a winner; and Tom Brady became the first quarterback to win 5 Super Bowl titles. What a magnificent achievement!

On the same day another event produced a shock result: Cameroon won the Africa Cup of Nations (football/soccer) for a fifth time. This also came as a surprise because Cameroon was not considered a favorite after 8 of its star players, all playing in European leagues, turned down the national coach's call-up to the squad. Consequently, the team actually participating at the event was assumed to lack quality and experience. However, reaching and then winning (coming from behind) the final against the odds serves as a brilliant example of how passion, true commitment, and pride to wear a national cap can sometimes move mountains and help teams win.

These 2 examples indicate that it is possibly the excitement of unpredictable sporting events that fascinates us the most. According to the media, a good number of Patriots supporters (even some prominent ones) left the stadium or Super Bowl parties because they did not believe their team could change a 3–28 score line into a 34–28 victory. How wrong they were in their prejudgment! So with this victory another big comeback story can be added to sporting history with other prominent comeback examples like Steffi Graf's Wimbledon final in 1993 (coming from nearly 1–5 in the final set) or the Oracle-Team USA triumph at the America's Cup 2013 defending their title after winning the last 8 races to triumph with a 9–8 score line.

All these events had 1 commonality: They somehow connected huge crowds of people (onsite and even more on television and the Internet) who were fascinated by spectacular sport performances at a competition—by the power of sports. People of different age groups, different cultures, and different social backgrounds are connected by their genuine interest in a particular sport, by excellence in sport performance, and the excitement (more drama than in any Hitchcock film) of a competition. Of course, supporters of the Atlanta Falcons (Super Bowl), Jana Novotna (tennis), or the Emirates Team New Zealand—to use the above examples—were disappointed with the results of these competitions. However, I am sure that even in defeat of their team they still paid admiration to the winners, acknowledging outstanding performances. Top performance, fair play, and respect for one another are important values in the world of sports. However, these values are not only important for athletes and on the pitch or in the sporting arena. They are equally important for spectators, supporters, and researchers in sport science and society in general.

On the pitch, a referee is in charge of making sure the sport is played by the rules and fair play is practiced, and athletes are expected to treat each other, as well as coaches and referees, with respect (and vice versa of course). As on the pitch, in sport-science

support and research there is likewise a kind of competition going on but there is no clear “referee” in the “game of science” or the “game of scientific publication,” nor are the rules as clear. In sport science the community of researchers is somehow connected by their genuine interest in a particular sport or research area. Scientists develop ideas, conduct experiments, prove a concept, and put a successful one into practice in order to give the athletes they support an advantage. This means that, for example, they sometimes have to delay the publication of promising research findings (to keep their athletes' advantage) even though an important measure of their own success is publications. Further complicating matters is that “competing” peers, those working in the same scientific field on sometimes very similar research questions, are serving as judges for manuscripts because they are acknowledged experts in the field. This means that at an international level competitors (as most journals ask for 2 independent reviews) are playing a key role in deciding the fate of a manuscript. Although there are no set rules, those who deal with a peer's manuscript should act in line with the professional ethos of a scientist and true values of sport: fair play, respect, excellence of performance, and perhaps accepting that someone reached the finish line (of publication) first!

In society it would be good if people cherished the high values of sports. In 2017, many people are worried about global political and economic developments. It appears to be a shared experience across the globe that many communities are divided because of contrary views on certain aspects of political and social life. Furthermore, people are worried about financial crisis, terrorist attacks, wars, numbers and the situation of refugees, and environmental and health issues. This editorial is certainly not the place for comment on any political views, decisions, or other of these issues even though they may have a direct impact on us, our societies, and also the world of sports. Sports, in particular high-performance sports, as well as sport-science research, are certainly international affairs. These endeavors require international competition to identify an athlete as the best. In research, sport scientists need the exchange of ideas with colleagues from other places with whom they share a genuine interest in a particular sport, and they need the “competition” with scientists working in the same field to develop their full potential. Cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity are the basis for effective and ethical generation of knowledge and its application. Despite occasionally conflicting personal interests, for example when peer-reviewing a manuscript, scientists, like athletes, should always respect and adopt these high values of sport: excellence in performance, fair play, and respect.

My wish is that, in these politically turbulent times, true values of sport be not only cherished by athletes and all members of the rather small sport-science community but also remembered by society in general for our daily life and activities.

For authors currently disappointed, for example, because of a rejected manuscript, there is another important value we can learn from sports: Believe in your strength and never give up! Sporting history has shown us that you can even change a 3–28 deficit into a 34–28 victory. Therefore, anything is possible.

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