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BOOK REVIEW

Zofia Żukowska, Ryszard Żukowski (eds.), *Fair play w sporcie i olimpiźmie: szansa czy utopia. (Fair Play in Sport and Olympism. Opportunity or Utopia)*, Polski Komitet Olimpijski, Klub Fair Play, Wydawnictwo Estrella, Warszawa, 2010.

On fair play globally: from theoretical reflection to practical Olympic education

“...education through sport cannot deliver today’s world from all the problems but it can contribute to an important extent to improve it.”

Katarina Ráczová

I have welcomed the publication of *Fair Play w sporcie i Olimpiźmie. Szansa czy utopia. Fair Play in Sport and Olympism. Opportunity or Utopia* conceived and edited by Zofia Żukowska and Ryszard Żukowski with my keenest interest. First of all, what makes this volume unique is that it has been published concurrently in Polish and English under the patronage of the Fair Play Club of Polish Olympic Committee, so that it can potentially reach a much wider readership.

It may appear that the book constitutes yet another voice in the debate about the well-known and thoroughly explored subject of fair play. Indeed, the term *fair play* itself seems to be well-recognized; however, it is often confined to a platitude – a worn-out media cliché signifying *cleanness* in sport for the fear of disqualification. If normalcy in our times becomes a virtue, then fair play may indeed appear to be no more than simple compliance with sport rules. However, it is a very sad prospect as the idea of fair play is so much more. Fortunately, there are people who have been tirelessly struggling for a better world, for whom *fair play* does play a significant role in their mission.

Zofia and Ryszard Żukowscy have undertaken an extraordinary task to portray fair play in the most comprehensive way against the background of changing reality inside and outside of sport. The Żukowscy’s professional, creative and social activities have been so extensive that a complete documentation of their most important achievements would require a separate publication. However, we

should mention here their editorship of a valuable publication *Zdrowie – Ruch – Fair Play* (Health. Movement. Fair Play) (Wydawnictwo ESTRELLA, Warszawa 2002), continued commitment to the Fair Play Club of the Polish Olympic Committee chaired by Zofia Żukowska herself, and long-term research and teaching activities at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw primarily focused on pedagogy of sport as well as on fair play and Olympism. Zofia and Ryszard Żukowscy are undoubtedly top-level experts who most definitely raise readers’ expectations regarding the quality of the volume under review.

Fair Play in Sport and Olympism includes articles from twenty-three contributors from Poland and abroad representing various professional fields. The publication is divided into three main parts containing 22 articles, a preface by Andrzej Kraśnicki, President of the Polish Olympic Committee, and Editors’ Introduction.

In the Introduction Editors outline the aims of their project, their position and expectations of contributing authors. In their opinion, crisis situations are inherent consequences of the dynamic, political, cultural and social transformations of reality and the ways to resolve them must be sought by means of education based on universal and timeless values accepted by the young: “Education through sports and Olympic education, where Olympism with its main principle of fair play is the source of values”. Editors’ main intention was to explore and compare viewpoints of researchers, athletes, journalists and sport activists

in order to gain a “realistic picture of fair play values in sport and Olympism”. They aimed to reveal experiences of different countries and individuals in propagating the value of fair play in sport and its place in education systems at various levels. They also wanted to “shed some light on inside and outside threats to the sport and the fair play values in sport”. An analysis of the contents of *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism* should reveal whether all these intentions have been fulfilled.

Part I of the book, “Objectives and fundamentals of fair play”, introduces the concept of fair play from different perspectives: ethnographic, philosophical, axiological, pedagogical, sociological and historical, which are fascinating and revealing even to experts on the subject. Before reading the first part I had thought I knew quite a lot about fair play and Olympism; however, my overconfidence was duly shattered. Now I humbly admire the profound knowledge of all those renowned contributors, wishing to learn from them as much as I can.

In the first article “To win...”, Jean Durry, Secretary-General of the International Committee for Fair Play (CIFP) established in 1963 and recognized by the IOC, discusses the statutory objectives of the committee quoting extensively from the *CIFP Declaration: Sport and Fair Play in the 21st Century*. The article outlines the semantic scope of the term *fair play* and constitutes a solid basis for all other analyses. It also emphasizes the realistic, action-oriented approach to fair play. The sense of performance – understood as engagement, the development and observance of rules, respect, health and equality of opportunity, are five factors of fair play that must be linked together. What is obvious – although surely surprising and incomprehensible to some – fair play does not only concern athletes but all those involved in sport: coaches, administrators, teachers, parents, doctors, supporters, sponsors and the sport media.

Wojciech Lipoński in his article “From filotimi to fair play and sportsmanship: some remarks on the history of sports ethics” takes the reader on a fascinating journey in time in search of sources of sport ethics and fair play: from Ancient Greece, through Celtic and medieval Europe, Elizabethan and Victorian England, to modern times. The author’s outstanding competence in finding sublime literary pieces concerning fair play and sport ethics in the overwhelming world literature is truly impressive.

Józef Lipiec in “Axiological foundations of fair play idea” goes beyond the conventional, customary and ethical views of fair play. Lipiec’s study constitutes a demanding reading to the average reader. With the use of axiological associations, not only does the author locate fair play in the world of established values, but first of all, proves its *raison d’être*.

The axiological dimension of fair play is also taken up and discussed more specifically by Józef Pólturzycki in “Fair play among the other educational values”. One must agree with the author that the reform of the Polish education system overemphasizes the changes in structure and outcomes of education and rather neglects its axiological foundations. With regard to these foundations fair play has, in fact, much to offer to students at any level of the educational system.

In “Fair play and ethics of cooperation” Halina Zdebska claims that a sport fight, despite its confrontational nature, requires a certain degree of cooperation from the contestants, not only in the process of development of a sport spectacle. The ethics of such cooperation is determined by fair play. Thus, if the idea of fair play is nevertheless forged in extreme conditions of a sport contest and it plays its role well, it would be utter squander not to implement it in other areas of cooperation between people. In Zdebska’s words: “Fair play represents the most elegant way of life – in sport and outside of it”.

Zofia and Ryszard Żukowscy in “Fair play as an educational value in sport and moral aptitudes of physical education teacher and sport coach” actually provide the answer to the question in the title of the collection. In the authors’ opinion, whether fair play is an educational opportunity or utopia depends largely on physical education teachers, sport trainers and the work atmosphere of the entire school and sport community. The main message to all those responsible for preparation of school and sport professionals is that they should not only concentrate on students’ “professional knowledge and skills” but also on “who they really are”.

I agree with Jerzy Nowocień in “Fair play as the source of moral values in education through sport” that this subject is not new and it is really hard to develop it along new lines; however, his astute observation that “The aim of voluntary participation in sports is to have a good time and the condition of joyful experience is to respect the

rules” is particularly noteworthy. This is exactly why we see in sport an opportunity to improve educational efficiency. Unlike in the education system, the young are not coerced into sport. If they are, if their parents’ or guardians’ crazes prevail, sport comes to an end.

In “Fair play as a moral value in the Olympic education” Zofia and Ryszard Żukowski note that if fair play can be enforced formally (by complying with sport rules), the informal rules (internal morality) cannot. The development of moral attitudes is the essence of Olympic education and, at the same time, the basic criterion of its effectiveness.

The last article in Part I is Bohuslav Hodaň’s “The notes to the problem of fair play”, which tackles various moral, ethical, sociological and cultural aspects of fair play and presents them against discordances between reality and expectations. This article is a conclusion of Part I and a smooth transition to Part II of *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism*. One of the most interesting aspects of fair play discussed by Hodaň is the role of art and physical culture in resolution of conflicts resulting often from misunderstood ethnical and national differences. Conflicts can be ultimately resolved, but “it is necessary to appreciate the cultural plurality and existing diverse values and ideas, which are the bearer of that given culture”. In this context fair play can be a perfect consensus ground.

Part II titled “Fair play – reality and expectations – doubts and worries” evaluates the reality of sport and Olympism. On the basis of their own experiences, analyses or empirical studies the contributors point to the actual place of fair play in sport and education and share their doubts with readers. After a slightly, idealistically oriented Part I, Part II brings us down to earth and makes us reflect upon it.

Ryszard Żukowski in “Sport – fair play – expectations and reality” analyzes professional sport as an occupation and source of income for many people, which often leads to incompatibilities between expectations and reality. In reality, a hierarchical structure is being established between the sponsor, the sport activist, the trainer, the competitor and the supporter. As mentioned earlier, the idea of fair play concerns all, however, – in Żukowski’s opinion – it plays a crucial role in the case of trainers. The trainer-pedagogue (regardless of his or her specialty) who is enthused with the fair

play idea and who propagates it in his or her work can solve multiple problems.

In “Fair play in the youth sport – educational opportunity or utopia?” Piotr Markiewicz adopts the perspective of an Olympic athlete and sport activist. In a telegraphic style Markiewicz recalls his sport life, comments on it through the prism of fair play and scrutinizes his youth experiences from the standpoint of an accomplished adult and sport activist. Many people followed Markiewicz’s path but the question remains how many of them concluded their sport careers with educational initiatives. A personal example is always the most valuable and credible. Markiewicz duly notices that “It helped many young people to learn about Olympism and fair play, and I am deeply convinced that it will stay with them and will enrich their lives in the future, in the same way as it happened to me”.

In his study “Fair play in students’ sport and everyday life – educational opportunity” Marcin Czechowski examines the state of fair play in an empirical way. His conclusions are not particularly surprising, however, some observations may be worrisome, for example, young people’s understanding of the principle of fair play and tendencies to breach the established rules in daily life, whenever the opportunity presents itself. The real problem lies not in the understanding of the value of fair play but in its internalization.

In her study of young children aged 9-10 years, “Fair play in young footballers training in Poland and England” Anna Dąbrowska, while commenting on her research results (quite disturbing in many places!), puts the readers at ease, justifying the youngsters’ attitudes with their short and limited experience and a long educational path through sport still ahead of them. Can we be sure, however, that they would choose their path wisely?

Michał Bronikowski, Małgorzata Bronikowska and Adam Kantanista pose a valid question in the title of their paper: “Do we need another de Coubertin to revitalise education through sport?” Of particular significance is the fact that the authors present physical education and sport and their links with Olympic education and fair play from a methodological standpoint. They indicate educators’ errors and fossilized behaviors, which can and should be revised. The key change, in the authors’ opinion, should be replacing the traditional (directive, sport- and fitness-oriented) teaching

style in physical education with inspiring students' sense of curiosity and initiative also by inclusion of traditional sports and games of other cultures and nations into the PE curriculum.

In the last article of Part II, meaningfully titled "Foul contra fair play" Tadeusz Olszański lists examples of foul play in sport and contrasts them – for the sake of readers' balance of mind – with fair play behaviors. He makes us realize – to our horror – that foul play today is not only visible but purposefully exhibited in the media, since it is attractive, expressive and spectacular! An alarm should be sounded among all, not merely among sport activists and researchers.

Part III of *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism* titled "Contemporary solutions to the Olympic education" includes contributions on positive instances of organization of Olympic education in different countries. This part fulfills the pedagogical mission of the volume as it shows not only what but how things should be done.

The opening paper "Youth in a risk society and Olympic education – some reflections" Walter Tokarski and Christoph Fischer examine the principles of Olympic education and disclose risks faced by young people today. They duly conclude that "Olympic ideas and Olympic Education can make an important contribution to teach young people even in periods of crisis and in risk society".

Katarina Ráczová in her essay "It is nice to talk but difficult to act" provides us with plenty of positive energy to act. In sport entangled in all kinds of problems of modern civilization problems there are numerous hazards facing, in particular, young people, but we can all eliminate them if we act together. In the author's opinion "Of course, education through sport cannot deliver today's world from all the problems but it can contribute to an important extent to improve it." Personally, I think this article could have been included in Part II.

Zofia Żukowska precedes her synthetic description of examples of "Olympic education in Poland and other selected countries" by evoking the fundamentals of Olympism and its links with education, quoting extensively from Pierre de Coubertin. She notes that it is important that the wise words of the "Apostle of Olympism" and the universal values they carry should be constantly invoked in the rapidly changing reality. A willful man can at any time easily apply Coubertin's ideas. Żukowska's examples of Olympic education at

different levels show Poland in a good light. Readers who are interested in Olympic education schemes in other countries can find here plenty of information in relevant sources of references.

Antonín Rychtecký in his discussion "The renewal of Olympic education in the Czech educational system" first justifies the value of Olympic education and then presents the tenets of an educational program implemented in Czech schools with the collaboration of the Czech Olympic Academy. Unfortunately, he fails to discuss or even mention the outcomes of the program of Olympic education that has been carried out for several years.

In "Olympic education in Belgium. The case of the Belgian Olympic Health Foundation" Thierry Zintz also discusses the principles of Olympic education and various interesting school initiatives launched by the Belgian Olympic Health Foundation that can be implemented in other countries. The cyclic character of these actions proves that their not merely educational episodes and that the number of students and parents involved in these programs inspires true admiration. Unfortunately, the article does not contain any data on the effectiveness of these programs.

In the article "What is happening down under? New Zealand, Olympism, education and pedagogical visions" Ian Culpan reflects on the implementation of Olympic education in New Zealand, where it forms an integral part of the PE curriculum in schools and where Olympism is an elective subject for secondary school students. Although the New Zealand program was launched in the early 1990s, no assessment of its effects has been given in the article.

The last article of the volume is the "Tribute to Mr. Janusz Piewciewicz – Secretary General of the International Committee for Fair Play" by Kajetan Hądzelek. Janusz Piewciewicz served as the CIFP Secretary-General for twenty years, making valuable contributions to the propagation of the Olympic movement and fair play and also promoting relevant Polish achievements. Piewciewicz died on September 7, 2010.

Before concluding this review I would like to apologize to all the contributors to *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism* for my often too casual discussion of their excellent papers. The present review exceeds the regular book review length in S.P.C.T. and my brief outlines of the collected papers allowed me to mention all the authors and,

hopefully, encourage readers to find relevant information in any of the three parts of the volume.

Does the contents of the articles fulfill the objectives set by Editors in the Introduction? Definitely, yes. The views of particular authors representing different areas of science and public life are logically set in three parts of the book, which allows the reader to comprehend the complex idea of fair play and the role it plays in modern times. The reading of *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism* inspires reflection, and although the authors often evoke the evil spirit of commercialization and corruption in the book its overall message is optimistic. We regain faith that the world can be a better place, and that Olympism with its cardinal principle of fair play can make a great contribution to it. This also appears to be an inexpressible intention of the Editors, and if the written word can even slightly improve this world, this publication is a great success. For that we say our thanks.

A collected edition of papers dealing with a specific subject (or a universal one such as *fair play*) involves a certain risk. Many authors tend to repeat the same standard contents, which can be annoying to readers of the entire volume. I also think that some authors could have left out parts of their texts without detriment to the overall quality of their articles and, in particular, abridged the article titles. Nevertheless, in the case of books the sin of lavishness can be forgiven much easier than the sin of mediocrity.

Despite a few minor shortcomings I think *Fair Play in Sport and Olympism. Opportunity or Utopia* deserves a high appraisal among publications tackling similar subjects. The comprehensive, coherent and synthetic discussion of the fair play phenomenon is the book's truly novel quality. Its practical value must be also emphasized. One must agree with the opinion of many authors that Olympic education is a great hope for a better future and that the PE teacher and the sport coach can greatly contribute to it. Finally, the publication can be an extremely useful aid in planning and implementing various educational programs based on fair play principles.

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