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SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT RITUAL IN SPORT

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ABSTRACT

The article presents an analysis of ritual – a phenomenon in human life known since the dawn of mankind. A predilection for rituals is one of the main features of human beings. Each community has developed certain rituals because they determine the attitude of a given group towards the world. Rituals exist in various spheres of life. Contemporary sport is a peculiar and spontaneous “para-religion” with associated rituals. In his analysis of ritual in sport, the author concentrates on two sport disciplines: baseball and soccer.

NATURE OF RITUAL

The term “ritual” comes from the Latin word *ritus* and in the traditional sense usually refers to consolidated, formalized and repeated activities having a religious character, including external forms of worshipping deities within a given religious community. Nowadays the term is used not only in the religious context, since the nature of rituals has changed over years and, as a consequence, they have become more and more secularized. One can also speak of rituals in the context of sport.

Ritual activities are defined by custom and are based on symbols, for example, cross, holy wafer, mask, flag, sacred stones, may have miscellaneous meanings. According to Susanne Langer, rituals are articulations of feelings, established with the aim of contemplating symbols, enabling the faithful ones cognition by means of fulfilling a communicative function of holy symbols. These are objects full of power and of indescribable value. It is reckoned that their power is particularly efficient; for example, in Christianity it is claimed that a cross held in the hand protects

from the devil, or that a picture of Mother of God protects the house from evil. That is why they are worshipped and prayed to [26: 236-240]. They are therefore representatives of a deity, a transmitter of its strength and can also be simply regarded as the source of that power.

A predilection for rituals is one of the main features of mankind. Each community has created some rituals because they form the stance of a given group towards the world and life and express its attitude towards reality. They share at the same time many features as frequently the same rituals occur in different parts of the world. This corroborates their undoubted universality as an element of human culture. Accompanying all important religious and secular events, rituals are both a sum of personal emotions and experiences, having their own meaning and great strength. According to Bronisław Malinowski, there are no peoples, even the most primitive ones, devoid of religion [32: 65]. And thus there are no cultures where rituals would not exist. They are an indispensable element of human existence.

Rituals can be both complex, engaging large groups of people, and simple, concerning small

groups or even individuals (like individual athletes). They can be calendrical (held in a fixed time) and non-calendrical (held at a moment of crisis). They are an expression of constant, deepest, most fundamental desires and needs of a given community and of mankind and belong to the most basic and durable institutions, which efficiently resist the flow of time. Handed down over centuries from generation to generation in a given group and enshrined in tradition, rituals are regarded to be irrefutable and inviolable and fully justified and right. What is more, the very possibility of cessation of their practicing causes fear.

Rituals include a collection of activities occurring in a fixed order, such as the use of special phrases or words, recitation, singing, dancing, group processions, or respectful handling of sacred objects (symbols). The order of carrying out individual activities is set and on no account may undergo any changes; thus there is no place for spontaneity in rituals.

Each ritual enacts certain stories based on beliefs (with a source in mythical tales) and conveys fundamental truths or messages aiming at triggering off emotional reactions of the participants of the ceremony and uniting the group in their common experience as well as in common pursuit of a given aim. According to Lord Raglan, myth is an indispensable element of a constantly repeated ritual [37: 147], and serves as its explanation [37: 125]. It, therefore, gives an answer to the question: Why is a given ritual – a sacred activity forming unity with a mythical sacred word in cult drama – practiced?

According to Durkheim, who regards religion as the basis of social order, rituals are a collection of myth-related rules governing our behaviour, which indicate how a man should handle sacred things [12: 40]. They help people unite and have common experiences from time to time, express common reflections and common actions. A cyclically carried out ceremony – a form of common communion – provides the basis for existence and renewal of a social group [12: 287].

In practising rituals, communities are mainly driven by their practical needs, so rituals are biological mechanisms serving to ensure protection and fertility, i.e. survival. On the other hand, the fear of disease, hunger, death and rejection is also an important element of ritual. Although ritual ceremonies may seem complex, the main reason behind them is simple – being saved by means of begging a deity (which was also the core of Indian

bloody ritual games of pre-Columbian America such as *poktapoh*, *pokyah*, *tlachtli*) [29: 152-158]. To outside observers rituals may seem complicated occurrences, unclear in reception, but to those who conduct them and to the participants they are simple and clear and make up definite and fully justified entities. They are an expression of desires to fathom the mystery of life to order and unite the believers with the forces of nature on the basis of the so-called “cognitive imperative” [10: 9-12] (the communicative aspect of ritual is emphasized among others by James Leach [6: 252]).

All human rituals came into being naturally, together with the development of social institutions. Because the beginnings of ritual belong to the distant, non-documented past, the oldest archeological findings, though they refer to the dawn of mankind, are not capable of solving puzzles explicitly.

Rituals – both formal and informal – require physical space for their enacting and renewing over years and often centuries. As Johan Huizinga states, “[...] the marking out of some sacred spot is also the primary characteristic of every sacred act. This requirement of isolation for ritual, including magic and law, is much more than merely spatial and temporal. Nearly all rites of consecration and initiation entail a certain artificial seclusion for the performers and those to be initiated” [25: 19-20].

Most rituals are carried out somewhere far from the ordinary world, in specially prepared places, prominent against the background of the landscape, for example, temples erected upon hills. These places, carefully chosen, are very clearly separated from the rest of the world, like a sports stadium. A place which does not have specific distinguishing features should be in some way modified, made more exceptional.

As much important as the place is the time of performing rituals. As Mircea Eliade remarks, rituals are practised not only in the sacred space, but also in “sacred time”, “at that time” (*in illo tempore, ab origine*) – at the time when a god, ancestor or hero practised the ritual for the first time [14: 31]. Secular time is therefore suspended, and the sacrifice takes place at the same primordial mythical moment [14: 47]. Time and place also play a great role in the case of sporting practices, to which we will return further.

Those mythically patterned actions are incessantly repeated by people, both in the case of “primitive” peoples and in developed cultures. This often concerns not only rituals, but also every

human activity, which gains efficiency by means of the existence of a mythical model. Australian Aborigines practice circumcision with the use of a stone knife because it is the way they had been taught by their mythical ancestors. The Judeo-Christian seventh holy day is *imitatio dei* for it reconstructs the primal gesture of God, who decided to rest on the seventh day after the toil of creation. God gives, therefore, an example to be followed because to all Christians extremely important are the words of Jesus Christ said after finishing the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me". [31: 100]. Imitation thus becomes a religious act, as well as a means of making people happy and self-assured and leading to salvation [14: 32-34].

Giving people a greater sense of well-being is connected with bringing relief in fear and dissipating fears in dramatic moments of crisis in the life of a community or in a period of changes, transformations or the passage of an individual or community from one state to another. Rituals, therefore, are a source of relief (also rituals practised in sport) as far as the psychological aspect of this phenomenon is concerned.

Each ritual has some goal, thus there are no rituals practised with no reason or out of boredom. The goal of the ritual must be clear and understood to all the people taking part in it. The presence of incomprehensible elements would make the ritual lose its strength of exerting influence and thus its meaning. Even primitive peoples know that a ritual must be treated as a whole, having a precise goal, pursued by obeying its rules and strengthening it with great emotional engagement. Carrying out of a ritual must therefore fulfill certain conditions. A constant – consisting of the same, well-known elements – collection of activities, whose participants can only be the initiated ones, serves a certain purpose, for example, begging for something or expressing adoration or purification. Ritual should make a strong impression, deepened by participants' personal involvement, which is a symbolic input of individual energies for the good of the community. This impression depends on the care with which preparations for the ceremony are made, as well as on the number of people involved in the preparations and the course of ritual events. One can notice a certain regularity: the larger the number of participants, the more spectacular and moving the ritual is. And the more moving the ritual, the bigger visual and spiritual satisfaction is derived by the participants who feel they are the

ritual's important part. We will try to demonstrate further in this article that it is also true with regard to sport.

As far as the neurological bases of ritual experiences are concerned, one has to mention endorphins – the so-called hormones of happiness – which evoke all euphoric states by improving the circulation, removing oxidants, calming down the mind and reducing anxiety. The high level of endorphins is observed usually after sunset, that is when rituals are usually practised (when sporting contests are also usually held), and it has a great influence on the quality and intensity of religious experiences [41: 272]. A man as if "flows" through the ceremony, with a sense of harmony and fulfillment (so-called *oceanic feeling*). Unusual behaviours and sensations (for example, decreased sensitivity to pain) appear at that time and then equilibrium becomes re-established. As a result of that state, emotional tensions, which have been gathered in the nervous system before, are relieved. Trance is, therefore, a kind of therapy, a form of catharsis [27: 141], resulting from the short-lasting union of a weak man with supernatural forces [16: 20].

Rituals should be carefully prepared. Preparations usually include choosing the attire, equipment or objects indispensable for the proper run of events as well as thinking over or rehearsing the individual phases (stages) of the ritual.

Ritual should have a structure of a drama. Its components should include a powerful beginning (a gesture or a sound signal), which is inviting the deities to the holy place; next, the ritual must be equipped with a well-thought central part, which is then followed by a gradually built climax; and finally a clear ending, that is bidding the deities farewell, sending back the extraterrestrial creatures, giving thanks, and finally a gradual return to the mundane reality. A spectacle accompanying a conducted ritual should provide observers with sensual stimuli: visual, acoustic and tactile. The more these stimuli occur, the greater degree of the the participants' involvement and the higher probability of a successful ritual. This also applies to sporting events. The set texts of a ritual facilitate communication (conveying intense feelings), and a talk and exchange of opinions after the end of the ceremony about what has happened help understand and give proper significance to what the participants have witnessed.

An important role is played the person conducting a ritual; it should be someone having

good contact with extraterrestrial creatures and well-prepared for the ceremony. The people conducting a ritual, like actors on stage, have some roles attributed to them and demonstrate a dramatic structure of that event by enacting ritual texts, proper moves, gestures, planned ways of getting about, focusing attention on themselves, and arousing expectations that something will happen [13: 142-162].

Flow of time, tradition, constant repetition and participation of people – these are the factors which strengthen a ritual and invest it with seriousness; otherwise, rituals become dead. Living rituals may become impoverished through gradual forgetting and the disappearance of their meaning, like for example, in the Polish saying “Na zdrowie” (literally “To health”) to a sneezing person. It allegedly comes from an old practice of checking if a man considered dead really died, which consisted in tickling his nostrils; sneezing meant that he or she was alive [38: 308]. Ritual elements can also die out, if they are, on the one hand, too old to arouse feelings of believers, or too new (when too many innovations have been introduced to the ritual too quickly), too elevated or too simple, or when they lack proper significance, dramatic structure, cohesion, participants’ involvement or their emotional input.

Rituals also help release inner energy hidden in subconsciousness. The indispensable in social actions necessity of self-control disappears at that time, and this releases huge reserves of energy, which may be used in different ways. Symbols play a big role in this process, having an effect on our emotions that were previously restrained or simply of which we were not aware of. According to Hugh D. Duncan, the lack of proper symbols, with the help of which communication is effectuated, leads to escalation of social tensions and weakening of group ties [11: 185-190]. The fact that participation in ritual performances is collective, additionally intensifies vitality and energy. Many researchers, like for example Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, perceive ritual as a phenomenon both expressive and symbolic [36: 233].

One must here also distinguish a special type of rituals, the so-called rites of passage (*rites de passage*). The creator of this conception was French anthropologist, ethnologist and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep, who noticed that life is a series of passages from one group to another or from one state to another (for example, birthday, reaching puberty, coronation, ordination, entering a sports

team, wedding, death), and accompanying ceremonies, where borders between *sacrum* and *profanum* are often crossed [40: 29-39; 7: 104].

These rituals, constituting the majority of the ceremonies inside human communities, concern transitory moments in the life of an individual or a community, where a certain border is crossed. Usually the symbolism of birth and death dominates in them, like in the transition from one year to another (welcoming the new year), one season to another (for instance, the ritual of chasing away winter and welcoming spring, examples of which may be the Polish custom of drowning of a Marzanna effigy and the coming of summer enacted in the ceremony of *Sobótka* or *Wianki*), one day to another day (rituals connected with phases of the moon) and all rituals of initiation, for example, shamanistic, cementing a sense of belonging to a given group, strengthening cohesion of a community and protecting its identity.

Rituals of initiation are also rituals of incorporation, consisting frequently of buying one's way into a group (a sports team) and gaining favour with the elders. It concerns the majority of young athletes beginning their careers. This was the case of the famous Polish footballer Włodzimierz Lubański, who in 1962 had to buy his older teammates from the Górnik Zabrze football club a bottle of vodka [43: 16-17]. Although, at first sight they may seem trivial, the rituals of initiation, which often take on the aforementioned forms, fulfill an important role in most communities and do not cease to be practised. Sometimes shooting a goal in an important match by a young player is such a turning point, which makes him accepted by the group. The situation looks similar within groups of supporters, which always comprise old and young members. The novices start with buying their first scarves, flags, then take part in their first away games, are accepted and slowly move up in the hierarchy.

A given rite of passage takes place only once in the life of an individual, but for the community such rituals reinforce tradition, repeat themselves in history, and are of great significance to an individual and the group also in the contemporary world. An example of such a phenomenon is the aforementioned ritual of incorporating new members into religious groups, castes, professional groups and sports teams.

According to Van Gennep, the rites of passage consist of three stages. The first one is *exclusion* (separation) dealing with isolating the

participant from the hitherto existing situations, for example, by placing him in a different location, by means of which comes a symbolic death of the old life. It is followed by the marginal phase (marginalization) concerned with natural suspense, being outside society because one does not belong to the old world any more and still is not being part of a new one (individuals may be then faced with miscellaneous bans, orders and trials). Finally, the third stage of the ritual is aggregation, which witnesses the return to everyday life, but in a new role, which is in a way a new birth. During aggregation the symbolic factor of putting on a new dress and the rite of purification often appear, and everything is usually crowned with a common feast and exchange of gifts. The phase of separation is the most exposed in complex funeral rites; the phase of marginalization plays a significant role during initiation, engagement and pregnancy; and the phase of incorporation during weddings. The aims of the rites of passage are reducing harmful phenomena and disorder in the life of a group and an individual, protecting the structure of a group and ensuring its unity [40: 36-37, 186-190].

RITUAL IN SPORT

Rituals are an inseparable element of sport. The heroes of the stadiums, even if they are in excellent form, use this legal doping for fear of bad luck that may appear on their way. They believe that thanks to these rituals they will achieve a success, so they perform miscellaneous activities, aiming at saving them from a misfortunate run of contests as well as giving succor to attaining a victory. Examples, which one can multiply, concern the whole galaxy of not only players, but also coaches. Let us take a look at different sports disciplines and different individual cases of practising rituals by American and Polish athletes.

As far as sport is concerned, according to Blanchard, "There is something about the arena that invites ritual. This is particularly true in the sporting activities of small-scale nonindustrial society. However, even sport in the contemporary Western world presents social settings conducive to ritual performance favouring functioning of a ritual" [4: 50]. Lipoński expresses a similar view: [...] sport is today one of the most visible public providers of ritual, which is characterized by unusual cultural dynamics. As a result of a specific secularization of sport, a variety of stadium

ritualized custom, environmental models of collective action, started to come into being around it, but at the same time many specific pre-beliefs appeared there, which, to distinguish them from 'serious' beliefs, let us try to define them here as pseudo-beliefs (Pol. 'wierzydła'), treated half-seriously, and sometimes really seriously as superstitions (for example, letting a black cat go before a bus with the team of opponents)" [28: 179-180].

Every sports discipline creates a peculiar world of specific behaviours and habits that can be called rituals. This separate world of those "subcultures, in the words of McPherson, Curtis and Loy, is unique, which is corroborated by the specific jargon of each discipline (tying emotionally supporters and athletes) as well as by references to history, for example, in seeking similarities between new stars and old heroes" [33: 261].

As for the United States, the very sporting contest has been an American ritual since colonial times. This ritual was growing with time and spread all over the States, undergoing transformations on an enormous scale. Like elsewhere in the world, also in America sport has ceased to be an amateur rite of passage and has become a professional and highly-specialized occupation. People began to identify themselves more with individual disciplines than with sport in general. Getting familiar with given rituals accompanying sport takes place as early as childhood – often on account of or with the immense contribution of television. Very often small children already know the rules of given sports as well as the names and characteristic techniques of sports heroes they try to emulate. Therefore, to many observers bowling is associated with a series of interesting behaviours of players, for example, special ways of taking steps, swinging the ball, wiping the hands, sprinkling the ball with a special powder with the aim of increasing friction, and group tribal rituals like mutual touching, patting, holding each other's arms, etc.

American football is an autumn sport, which additionally strengthens the specific rite of passage between summer and autumn, as the beginning of the contests means the end of summer and the beginning of autumn. Every year it attracts thousands of spectators to the contests on all possible levels, from school to the NFL games. On each of those levels American football matches are a ritual of renewal of old traditions. An important role plays here, for example, attachment to anthems

and flags, club colours and traditions, by means of which local patriotism is celebrated. Exemplification is provided by rituals connected with putting on the club strips, in which there are elements contributing to the identification with the club totem. For example, if a club is called the Hawks and has a hawk as its emblem, the predatory bird becomes a counterpart of a tribe totem.

American football is considered a game restricted to men only; that is why it involves rituals connected with emphasizing manliness and domination. One can mention characteristic uniforms with pads protecting different parts of the body, creating the general impression of medieval knight's armour. Another magical-ritual aspect is emphasizing the destructive, harmful influence of women, which results in refraining from sex on the night preceding the competitions, which is a necessity enshrined in tradition and which – to some degree – also takes place in baseball. That motif was shown in the film *Damn Yankees* (Polish title – *Czego pragnie Lola*), when the heroes – baseball players – in the song *Game* tell each other how they resisted the charms of beautiful women, focusing their thoughts on the game which await them the next day. They state that play is the most important to them, which corroborates a characteristic quotation crowning the tales of the players, who were giving accounts of their sexual conquests. An insurmountable obstacle on the way to the full success is just a thought, being at the same time the main part of the refrain of the song: “Then I thought about the game” [9].

The phenomenon of refraining from sex often occurs in soccer and takes on the form of imposed rigour of abstinence by means of keeping the team players away from women, or the form of individual rigour imposed by the players themselves. This is how German goalkeeper Toni Schumacher describes it: “I am not made of stone myself, but during important tournaments such as the world championships I don't need my wife at all. In that period I resign from sex. After all, I am not a gorilla. At that time I put erotic life aside and think only about one thing: to become a champion, to become the best goalkeeper in the world. I don't have at that time even a moment for pleasures and excitement. [...] Consciously or unconsciously, everything revolves around aiming at victory. This is the so-called ‘sublimation of the urge’...” [39: 72].

Another example concerns golf players who start the game with players from golf clubs with

odd numbers; basketball players who bounce the ball before free throws; anglers who spit on a bait before casting a line; tennis players who avoid the yellow colour; hockey players who pat the goalkeeper's pads before a match; and rodeo riders who shave before contests [34].

Another kind of ritual related to sports fans can be collectively characterized as supporting, which may consist of stamping, booing, or chanting in some specific situations. What is especially worth emphasizing, apart from rituals practised by athletes, there are more and more new rituals invented by the fans of individual teams, for example, specific ways of supporting or showing disapproval by means of booing someone or something. A peculiar type of the discussed phenomenon are fans' rituals connected with analysing statistics.

Although the above observations confirm our conviction that rituals appear in almost all sports disciplines, the present paper focuses on those which give specific color to baseball and soccer.

RITUAL IN BASEBALL

Baseball, regarded by many as the main American sport – even as a national sport associated with many political events – is the source of numerous rituals. Baseball – like American football with its emphasis on the passage from summer to autumn – is also a rite of passage (from winter to spring). The start of the baseball season is connected with the coming of a warmer season and it also takes on the character of a tribal ritual of renewal. Another rite of passage in baseball is connected with honouring famous retiring players who become part of history and gain the status of heroes, almost deities, in their own pantheon called the Hall of Fame. It is very similar in soccer – the number one sport in Europe. There is also an interesting ritual of using baseball phrases and terms in everyday language, for example, “getting to first base”, which means kissing someone on a date, or “it ain't over till it's over”.

As for the game itself, according to some, there is no other sport with such a number of individual, singular rituals as baseball. According to Thomas Boswell, “Of all our sports, none is so tied to habits. That's why baseball has more myths than any of our games” [5: 177]. Anthropologist Alaka Wali claims that sporting events, both in old

and new cultures, are highly ritualized activities, and baseball – because of its pace – creates the most space for the appearance of ritual [1]. A possible reason for this is baseball seniority among American sports. It had become a popular past time in the United States much earlier than football and basketball [1]. In its beginnings, it was practiced by common people, whose life was steeped in folklore.

Players unwillingly admit to following their singular rituals. As Ron Luciano observes “Not many players will admit that they are superstitious, but when they are to hit the ball, some of them go through activities more complicated than in the case of an Olympic gymnast” [30: 136]. Ritual behaviors specific to baseball include, for example, avoiding touching the foul line. As an example one can mention here Emiliano Fruto from Columbus Clippers, who – according to the club website – jumps over the foul line as he comes on and off the pitch [8]. One can also mention avoiding touching the bases with the right leg, as noted by John Lowenstein: “It goes on and on. You see guys stumbling running the bases because they’re so determined to ‘hit every base with the left foot’ ” [5: 178]. It is also spitting in the hand before grabbing the bat. Some baseball players sleep with a bat on the night before the match (like Richie Ashburn, for example). Others are obsessed with consuming solely one specified product before a match, for example, chicken, like Wade Boggs, whose wife was allegedly supposed to have over 40 recipes for chicken dishes, and who followed this custom invariably for over seven years [15]. Others talk to themselves and to the ball, like Mark Fidrych [18], or do not change the clothes, which is supposed to bring good luck, like Carl Yastrzemski, unusually accustomed for many years to a pair of red socks, being the Red Sox club emblem [18]. Julio Gotay played baseball matches with a cheese sandwich in his back pocket. Glen Davis used to chew constantly the same gum, which he kept under the cap during the breaks. Dennis Martinez after each inning drank a glass of water, and afterwards put it upside down under the bench so by the number of empty cups his mates could tell which inning it was. Roger Clemens on his way to the pitch patted the memorial plaque of Babe Ruth in the Monument Park of the Yankee Stadium [15]. Finally, the famous Joe DiMaggio also carried out his ritual consisting of touching the second base before entering the pitch [8]. Mike Hargrove was famous for his delaying the game (on account of a whole series of petty movements on the home

plate) and was dubbed *The Human Rain Delay* (per analogiam to *rain makers*, i.e. people attributing to themselves the magical power of bringing rain, particularly precious in drier regions of the globe) [18]. Hargrove’s interesting behaviours include, for example, three mock swings with a bat as well as wiping of sweat from above the upper lip always with the left hand. Luciano remarks with a sneer: “I always wondered how much sweat might gather above his lip between his throws” [30: 137].

One of the present-day players of Arizona Diamondbacks is Wily Mo Peña, who smells his bat all over and then bites and kisses it. Asked why he does it, he answers like the majority of players – “I don’t know. It’s just something I always do” [18]. Joel Pineiro is famous for his singular way of getting dressed – he always begins with his left hand and left leg. Tim Wakefield does crosswords before matches. Hispanic American players – though not only them – wear holy medallions and often cross themselves (although this is also practiced by players of other sports) [18].

Ron Luciano – during his umpire career – noticed some players’ attachment to their gloves: “Players [...] love their gloves. They treat them tenderly, apply to wounds, even talk to them. Some players, like [...] Aurelio Rodriguez, use the same worn glove throughout their careers. When he lost his favourite glove, Graig Nettles got depressed” [30: 86]. He also paid attention to a certain interesting habit of hitters: “A hitter treats his bat with great passion. Some of them believe that every bat has a definite number of good hits attributed to it and after they have hit well many times, they are put aside till a critical moment appears when they have to be used again” [30: 86].

One of the characteristic baseball rituals is chewing tobacco. This practice, which is often presented as an almost integral part of the game, was very popular in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, and enjoyed a great popularity among baseball players. Chewing tobacco was believed to stimulate players more efficiently than smoking. It also had an additional value in the form of reducing thirst and preventing the lips from drying, which results from using saliva by players to soften the gloves. Luke Appling praised chewing tobacco in the following way: “They told me: ‘My boy, better quit that’. But I chew every day, for sixty years” [5: 259]. This tradition has lasted for years, though nowadays it is known that it is not less harmful to health than smoking cigarettes. One of tobacco chewing

victims was, for example, the famous baseball player Babe Ruth, who died because of a cancerous tumor in the nasopharynx [3].

Another ritual practice is mutual provoking and delaying play between the pitcher and the hitter, aimed at irritating and upsetting the opponent. To get rid of one's own nervousness and feel relief in such stressful situations, miscellaneous rituals are used, aiming at being an antidote to stress and a way of protection from it, like spotting pretty women on the stands (that habit also concerns the umpires, which Luciano confirms: "Sometimes I counted the spectators [...] or I tried to spot the prettiest woman at the stadium" [30: 65]), or spitting out tobacco as far as possible.

Therefore, let us repeat – the majority of sports frequently have rituals common to them all. Some of them are based on using openly religious and magical behaviours, for example, in the form of saying prayers, spells, summoning good powers, handling magic objects. The *esprit de corps* of the team is strengthened by the rites of passage connected with accepting a new player to the team. To a player – in baseball, soccer and other team sports – especially important are also the rituals connected with negotiating the height of the contract.

As mentioned earlier, with the flow of time rituals undergo transformation. An example of a ritual once popular among American baseball players was looking for white horses on the day of the match as the sight of a white horse was regarded to be a very good omen. This habit, particularly widespread in the 1920s and 1930s, was given up in the following decades due to the disappearance of horses from the streets of American towns. Another curio is that until the 1960s crossing the bats was not tolerated in a situation when one bat was placed upon another; this phenomenon still occurs sporadically [15].

RITUAL IN SOCCER

As far as soccer is concerned, ritual practice is often a specific way of putting on the soccer shoes or a special way of wrapping the ankles with the laces. For example, the English soccer player John Terry believes he will have bad luck if he does not wrap his ankle with a shoelace three times [44]. Gary Neville does not change the boots, in which he wins matches [24]. A ritual activity is also putting the briefs inside out. Moreover, one can

also enumerate, like in baseball, soccer players' attachment to favourite numbers on shirts. Some pay attention to a certain way of getting out of bed on the day of the match, others to a specific way of entering the pitch, for example, with the right leg. Englishman Gary Lineker did not shoot at goal during the warm-up, not to "waste" goals. Another Englishman – Stuart Pearce – kept a luck mascot (a toy horse) on the substitutes' bench [24]. German Toni Schumacher took some allegedly miraculous gadgets with him to matches: "In the white bag, where I keep spare gloves and a baseball cap, there are also my talismans from Sweden and Turkey, gifts from supporters. Lucky charms: a little, woolen doll, little pig, one-pfennig coin. I take them everywhere, partly because I like them, and partly because I am a little superstitious. The most important of the talismans is a photograph of my son, Olivier" [39: 11].

Sometimes the used objects of magical power have the sanction of the official religion. Wearing holy medallions and crossing themselves by Roman Catholic baseball players have been already mentioned. In soccer, instances of sprinkling the pitch or the coach bench with holy water have been known (e.g. Giovanni Trapattoni) [24]. In the case of more exotic cultures, like Cameroon, these are prayers of shamans and casting spells on rivals, sprinkling the pitch with magic powders, putting a spell on balls, or even urinating on the goal [44]. As former Polish coach Kazimierz Górski notes in his autobiography, during the Olympic Games in 1972, a sorcerer brought by the Ghana team allegedly cast a spell on the Polish national team; however, it turned out to be unsuccessful (Poland won 4-0) [17: 194].

According to Robert Philip, a soccer player famous for one of the most extensive collection of pre-match ritual activities was Scottish goalkeeper Alan Rough, whose 10-point list included not shaving on the morning of a match, putting on (under his goalkeeper's jersey) a shirt from his junior days, taking an old tennis ball with him onto the pitch, always using the peg numbered 13 in the dressing room, bouncing a ball against the wall three times in the tunnel before a match or blowing the nose as often as possible during a match (unfortunately, such a complex system of rituals did not save him from his weak performance during the World Cup in Argentina in 1978) [35]. As his counterpart in the world of baseball one may consider Al Hrabosky, known as The Mad Hungarian, who before each important pitch

performed the whole series of specific activities, for example, moving away from the pitcher's plate (stalking towards the second base), goose-stepping, taking off his hat, wiping across his head always with his right forearm, swinging his left foot and jerking his head up and down [42: 191]. Ron Luciano gives the example of Roberto Clemente as a ritual "record holder", who was known for wearing voodoo symbols, bracelets and other bits and pieces: "He was said to be able to run from his home plate to the first base in 4.2 seconds, and in 3.9 seconds without beads" [30: 138]. According to the Columbus Clippers website, a matchless master in this realm is the Clippers third baseman Kory Casto, who says that there are lots of such habits and admits "... I do the littlest things and some people think I'm crazy" [8].

Polish goalkeeper Radosław Majdan has also his rituals and believes in the power of amulets; for example, he never parts with his Atlantis ring. Asked about that, he states: "I always put on first the right shoe and the right glove. I also believe in amulets, which bring me good luck" [23]. Another goalkeeper, Jerzy Dudek, achieved fame with his dance performed before penalty kicks, called "Dudek dance". Many Polish soccer players cross themselves before a match. Such behaviours may be treated as religious rituals, which – as mentioned before – also have their permanent place in sport. This crossing oneself may sometimes have far-reaching consequences. For example, the famous Polish goalkeeper Artur Boruc, who played for Celtic Glasgow, regarded as a Roman Catholic club, blessed himself in front of the fans of Glasgow Rangers, which made them seethe with rage. Boruc described his pre-match ritual in the context of Glasgow derby matches in an interview with Polish sport journalists:

- "So your religiousness doesn't mean only provocative crossing yourself before a match with Glasgow Rangers, whose fans are almost one hundred percent Protestant?"
- God forbid! In Poland I had started every match with the sign of the cross. And nobody was disturbed by that. The truth is that Scots themselves created the problem with Boruc's religiousness and wrongly made an instigator out of me. The pre-match ritual that I practise not only was not dangerous, but also was not supposed to hurt anybody's feelings. The Rangers fans were simply furious after the defeat and took the whole anger out on me.

- And do you ever think before crossing yourself, or is it already an unconditioned reflex?
- Generally, I do not think about this manifestation of belonging to the Roman Catholic world at all, but before another match against the Rangers it was difficult not to wonder even for a moment. The stands really waited for – I felt it clearly – the way I would behave. The fans of the rivals probably thought that I would break down under pressure. Well, they got disappointed. I crossed myself of course, and I will always do it" [22].

According to Allen Guttman, who studies links between sport and religion, all activities which might be today described as sporting ones, were in primitive and ancient societies closely connected with religious cults. The beginnings of secularization of sport took place as early as in ancient Greece, when it started to be part of everyday life, but only in the Roman times did the religious meaning of sports contests diminish in a visible way. Therefore, as Guttman claims, contemporary sport is closer to Roman sport. The pre-match prayers, or prayers during match breaks in the locker room, are not the same as asking higher forces for good harvest or worshipping deities in the form of sporting contests, like it took place in ancient Greece. Religion stays aside, and for the players a match is a secular experience even if supernatural powers are asked for help [19: 148-150]. Guttman claims however, that sport – with its cult practised by whole nations, with its heroes adored and emulated by the youth – acquires in itself a quasi-religious meaning. Therefore, it may be regarded as a kind of secular religion [19: 149-150].

Shirl J. Hoffman sees in sport a big potential of expressing religious feelings; he claims, however, that a link between individual religious rituals of sportsmen and their system of values is often missing. Those rituals are therefore – according to Hoffman – only utilitarian behaviours, aiming at leading to the victory and devoid of emotional experience [20: 157-158].

Diminishing the sense of religious rituals and religiousness in sport may be connected with changes in the structure and the meaning of sport, but also, as Mary Douglas claims, may be a part of a revolt against formalism, which expresses itself in rejecting rituals in other realms of life and on a much greater scale [11: 18].

As far as sport coaches are concerned, all soccer fans in Poland remember the legendary

coach of the Polish national team in the 1970s, Kazimierz Górski, who never shaved before matches. Górski recalls it in his biography: “Yet, the main talisman was allegedly my beard. Today, I cannot remember exactly when that began. Undoubtedly, before the match against England in Chorzów. And then it became a habit: not to shave before a match. And it remained like that. I also lost games being unshaved. So what is the conclusion? Am I superstitious or not? Well, I guess I am” [17: 279]. Moreover, Górski also believed in the miraculous powers of his wonderful umbrella, which he used to take with him to matches. More recently, another Polish national team coach, Jerzy Engel, believed in the magical properties of his coat. During the World Cup qualifying matches in 2002, the coach of the Polish national team put on his famous brown coat before every match. The Polish national team won the elimination round and qualified for the world cup after 16 years of absence. Unfortunately, during the World Cup the charm vanished. Miraculous coat stories also pertained to the Portuguese coach of Chelsea London, Jose Mourinho, as well as to Bologna’s coach Renzo Ulivieri, who allegedly wore his coat even in 30° C heat [44].

Describing the types of magical-ritual behaviours observed in sports players we usually concentrate on sporting events themselves, especially those taking place on the pitch. However, there are also rituals taking place in locker rooms, like the case of the players of the Italian national team, who during the World Cup in 1982 stood in a circle, in the middle of which Bruno Conti knelt down, while the other soccer players put their hands on his head, while Conti cried out the slogan: “Who shirks fight...”, and his mates finished: “is a great...” (expletive deleted), which in the Italian original had its rhythm and rhyme [2]. Also conversations of coaches with players taking place in locker rooms during the match break are often a ritual phenomenon in themselves. Every coach uses his own “tricks”, which are to rouse the team to action. These may be the aforementioned standing in a circle, common prayers, choral singing, chanting, or asking rhetorical questions, e.g. “Who is going to win the match?”, followed by choral, usually directed, answers. Because on the whole, coaches prefer loud rituals full of expression, in most locker rooms during matches there is no peaceful atmosphere.

To sum up, it seems that there is no life without rituals. Consequently, there is no sport

without rituals. Rituals undoubtedly give color to sporting competition, but they are not merely a curiosity. They are an important element of many athletes’ lives. The phenomenon of ritual behaviours in sport is very broad and definitely requires further research.

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