

Foreword

Sport is fun; it is good for health and well-being and can contribute to building a sense of community. And in addition, it is a big industry. This final fact may affect the prevailing understanding of the game: unlike amateurs, professional players are offered an extrinsic source of motivation for partaking in sports and this may contribute to specific conflicts between self-interest and morals.

In her book “The Golden Rule in Sports” Alicia Bockel investigates this issue from an ethical point of view, analyzing the reasons for conflicts between self-interest and morals in professional sport as well as offering a normative orientation as to how to behave in situations of conflict.

A basic cause of such conflicts is competition, which is a crucial prerequisite for the “sweet tension” which fascinates fans and (paying) spectators. Alicia thus argues that competition can be seen as a means for a deeper rooted common interest of all involved, namely, the interest that the game takes place. To make this happen, credible rules are indispensable—but rules alone do not suffice. A further pre-requisite is the understanding of the athletes—and others—that it makes sense to adhere to the rules, so that the game is maintained. This understanding typically includes values like fair play or respect as its focal points, and they make a visible difference with regard to the way players adhere to the rules (or not).

These inter-relationships between moves, rules and understanding can be nicely summarized, as Alicia shows, in the Golden Rule “invest in the conditions of social cooperation for mutual advantage”, where the concept of

“conditions” is tantamount to a system of fair competition. The right investments take place when athletes play by the rules, when governing bodies enforce the rules in a fair way, or when supporters back their team in a way that is not disrespectful to the opposing team. This implies that all stakeholders, ranging from the media, to coaches, spectators, governing bodies, and athletes, play a role in creating conditions that can build a mutual advantage—and therefore are responsible for the way the game is now and will be in the future.

The fashion in which Alicia reconstructs individual actions to represent signals that shape the understanding of the game is enlightening, especially in terms of the implications that she draws from the determination of responsibility, the role of trust (worthiness), or the criterion of consistency as a provider of information. Accordingly, this book is not only a contribution to theory, but offers helpful orientation for all those who are acting in the realm of (professional) sports.

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The Golden Rule in Sports

Investing in the Conditions of Cooperation for a Mutual
Advantage in Sports Competitions

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