Youth Sports, Official Sports Policy, and Children's Rights in Society

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Introduction: A global subject

Child abuse in sport is a global issue, and it appears in various forms and degrees of gravity. Being a victim of trafficking (on, for instance, the global football market) is certainly more serious than if an individual football player is excluded from a particular game due to a thoughtless trainer's goal-oriented tactics.[1] In the same manner, baby-trained champions suffering from excessive training must be considered as more serious than when insensitive parents yell at their children in order to make them perform better on the field.[2] In this respect, child abuse in Swedish sports – in the perspective of an international evaluation – will, at first glance, probably appear to be of less significance, and, in comparison, not particularly dramatic. However, the fact that several organisations and interest groups recently have put the protection of children in sports on their agendas in order to raise the moral standard of Swedish youth sports, indicates that something is wrong within this sphere. This article will take as its point of departure the apparent need for moral discussion and protection, emanating from real abuse as well as from philosophical dilemmas in the phenomenology of youth sports, and its relation to (adult) sports in general.

1 Large sports clubs works with a similar concept of recreation and selections among children as former regimes in East Europe, with commercial profit as ardour instead of political prestige. Besides, agents have turned up as a late profession, chasing talents among minors in Africa and Latin America. Cf., David, Paulo (2004) Human Rights in Youth Sport: A Critical Review of Children's Rights in Competitive Sports. Routledge.

2 During the 90s we have observed a growing amount of "baby-trained champions", due to blind and headless coaches, too fanatic parents, and hysterical media-covering. Quite a lot of stars (e.g., Olga Korbut, Chris Ewert, Zinédine Zidane) have recently told their stories of a lost childhood. Cf., ibid.

The Swedish Sports Confederation's policy of (youth) sports

Sport is supposed to play a key role in public health, in socialization, in the integration into Swedish society, and in improving Swedish understanding of foreign cultures.[3] In Sweden, almost all organized sports are governed by the Swedish Sports Confederation, SSC, [Riksidrottsförbundet, RF]:

- The SSC is an umbrella organization with the task of supporting its member federations and representing the whole Swedish sports movement in contacts with the authorities, politicians, and so on.
- It is the SSC that defends the legitimacy of sport and reports on the current state of sport, argue for the social value of sport, and illuminating its extent and importance as well as discovering who participates in sport and why.
- There are innumerable Swedes who first come into contact with expressions such as deputy auditor at their sports club's annual general meeting. As a member of a voluntary organization in the SSC, one soon becomes involved in the democratic process.

The Swedish sports model is entirely dependent on the voluntary support of local leaders as well as on public financial, especially from local government, and the widely spread club system. It is estimated that *more than half a million Swedes* have one or more positions as leaders in the Swedish sports movement. Almost all of them fulfil their duties without any financial compensation. Sports leaders in Sweden are, thereby, motivated neither by financial rewards nor personal ambition.

Sport is categorized according to age and level of ambition. Children's sport is generally considered to extend to the age of twelve, and youth sports to the age of twenty. In children's sport the emphasis is on play and the possibility to engage children in different sports. A child's *general sporting development* is the norm for children's sport. Although competition is an aspect of the game, it must always be conducted on the children's own terms.[4]

The idea of sport, in the light of SSC's vision, is to organize sport at all levels so that it develops people positively, physically, psychologically, socially and culturally. Accordingly, sport is organized so that

- it is constantly developing and improving at all levels both in form and content.
- everyone who wishes, regardless of race, religion, age, sex, nationality and physical or mental state, should be able to take part in sporting activities arranged by clubs.
- it provides experiences and creates contact between people from different groups in society.[5]

3 In relation to its geography and population, Sweden is one of the world's most sporting nations. Almost half of Sweden's seven million inhabitants between the ages of 7 and 70 are members of a sports club. (Source: http://www.rf.se/t3.asp?p=19299)

4 In youth and adult sports SSC distinguishes between competitive, performance sports and sports for all or fitness sports.

5 Every eighth Swede is either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant. Sport plays a key role in their integration into Swedish society and in improving Swedish understanding of foreign cultures. (Source: http://www.rf.se/t3.asp?p=21053). Furthermore, the Swedish Sports Confederation shall encourage the development of sport in other countries and take its responsibility for everyone's right to sport. (Source: http://www.rf.se/t3.asp?p=21054)

- those who take part are able to decide about and take responsibility for their activities.
- it affords all who take part comradeship and a secure sense of community.[6]

These demands on sport are even more crucial in light of children's and youth's social fostering through sport. In this respect, the sports movement, and its authority, the SSC, claims to be constantly seeking to develop and improve its activities, and to adapt them in accordance with the needs and wishes of athletes, leaders and parents. By the concept of "good at sport and good sport" SSC means sporting activity "that promotes democracy, fostering, equality, fair play, healthy finances, respect for others, voluntary commitment, and environmental awareness".[7]

We will even find statements in the SSC's collection of policy directed towards children and youth sport, protecting the *play element* in sport from the power of conquest and triumphs, as well as guarding the welfare of children and the individual development of children and youth.

For most children, sport offers, together with family and school, primary socialization, and in this respect it must be guided by quality and rights, rights which are connected to free will, independence and empowerment.

Evidently, all statements are official policy and ideology, and often very hard to realize in the practice of sport, considering its tradition – and phenomenology – of conquest and victory.[8] Consequently, several conflicts and disputes have emerged, particular in relation to equality, fair play and respect for others, but also in relation to the question of health and fostering as well as the increasing "medicalisation of sport", on various levels.[9] In spite of an increasing public debate, the agenda has historically been set by the sport organisations and has been related to an emphasis on the long-established self-regulation in and of sport.

Self-regulation, and external moral and legal pressure

Since sport traditionally has been regarded as leisure and relaxation, and in this respect as a rather trivial activity, it has been governed by the internal rules of sport and its administration, with rather limited involvement from the political and legal spheres, particularly in Swedish sport.[10] Thus, Swedish sport has been governed by the practice of internal dispute settlement. In spite of a principal element of play in sport, it has gradually developed into more serious manifestations. In the wake of the increasing commercialisation of sport, Swedish – as well as global – sport has come to the attention of the legal system, with subsequent litigations and legal action in civil courts. We have in this respect – at an international level – observed several legal actions directed towards gender and ethnic discrimination, as well as sexual harassment in sport. Doubtless, the legal system has become a significant intruder, and several socio-legal scholars are speaking of an increasing

6 Source: http://www.rf.se/t3.asp?p=21052
7 ibid.
8 McFee, Graham (2005) Sport, Rules and Values. Routledge; Loland, Sigmund (2003) Fair Play in Sport. Routledge.
9 Cf., Howe, P. D. (2004) Sport, Professionalism, and Pain: Ethnographies of Injury and Pain. Routledge.
10 Norberg, Johan R. (2004) Idrottens väg till folkhemmet: Studier i statlig idrottspolitik 1913-1970. Malmö Studies in Sport Sciences, no. 1. SISU Idrottsböcker.

"juridification of sport".[11] However, regardless of the systemic threat, the legal system has focused on rights (e.g. Bosman and the European Union law), as well as inequalities (e.g. discrimination), and unsuitable behaviour (e.g. violence) in sports, and thus contributes to the quality of modern sport.[12]

In relation to the professionalisation of sport, there seems to be a need for professional ethics as an addendum or adjustment to traditional ideals of fair play, at least in relation to coaching and leadership, a tuning which in the end might work beneficially in relation to children and youth sport.

Organisations in Sweden dealing with abuse and maltreatment in sport

Sport carries a paradox.[13] Sport can be cruel as well as enjoyable: one becomes a champion, the other a loser. However, this is a natural condition in sport, and even a vital principle that contributes to the excitement and entertainment in sport. But sport might be more malicious than a defeat in a particular game. It might stimulate confidence and optimism among children and youth, or, on the other hand, reduce the optimism and cause a lack of self-command and self-assurance among young people. In general, we talk cheerfully about the positive impacts of sport, such as happiness and friendship, whereas the dark sides of sport, such as exclusion, harassment and exaggerated training, are disgracefully neglected.[14]

The website of Children's Rights in Society is instructive and presents various testimonies from youths concerning sport. Several statements indicate contentment, for instance, "Our coach is the only adult possible to speak to" (girl, 13), and "Handball is a sphere of freedom, and it's possible to speak about everything with our coach" (boy, 14). In spite of positive attitudes, most of the letters or e-mails on the website convey a depressing conception of sport: "I'm hardly allowed to play at all; when the coach sends in the best players, I am always on the bench. Last game the best players played from the start" (boy, 13). "I am being oppressed in sport, but the coach doesn't care" (boy, 14). "I have been told by coach to lose weight" (girl, 12). "I feel marginalised and lonesome because of my background as immigrant" (anon.). "I feel bad, because I am not playing" (boy, 13). These testimonies of sport experiences from teenagers produce mixed feelings.[15] Firstly, and quite naturally,

11 Foster, Ken (1993) "Developments in Sporting Law;" i Allison, L (red) The Changing Politics of Sport. Manchester University Press; Gardiner, Simon (1994) "The Law and the Sports Field" Criminal Law Review, 513; Gardiner, Simon & Felix, Alexandra (1995) "Juridification of the Football Field: Strategies for Giving Law the Elbow;" Marquette Sports Law Journal 5 (2) 189; McArdle, David (2000b) "Rethinking Sports Organizations's Response to Workplace Concern;" in Greenfield & Osborn, eds. Law and Sport in Contemporary Society. Frank Cass; Greenfield, Steve & Osborn, Guy (2003) The Role of Law within Sport;" idrottsforum.org.

12 Carlsson, Bo (2004) "Idrottens förrättsligande" [The Juridification of Sport]; idrottsforum.org. Carlsson, Bo (2005) "Förändras idrotten i dess kontakt med juridiken?" [The Law, and the Transformation of Sport]; Svensk idrottsforskning, 3:51-5.

13 Eitzen, Stanley D. (2003) Fair and Foul. Beyond the Myths and Paradoxes of Sport. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

14 According to Jay Coakley there are actually no empirical data supporting sport's positive or negative effects on personal development. Cf., Coakley, Jay (2003) Sport in Society. McGraw-Hill Education.

15 Carlsson, Bo & Fransson, Kristin (2005) "Barn och idrott i ljuset av FN:s barnkonvention" [Children and Sport in the Light of the Declaration of Right]; Svensk idrottsforskning, 3:72-4.

it is not positive if sport appears to be the only sphere of freedom available to youth. In this light, the quotations direct our attention to the question of belonging and socialisation in society in general. On the other hand, if sport is perceived as negative by children and youth, as most of the statements indicate, youth sport has huge problems inherent in its tradition: problems which cannot be justified in relation to the best interest of the child or the UN declaration of children's rights.

As a result of an increasing awareness of rights in general, a growing debate on sport's societal impact, and numerous publicised occurrences of child abuse in sport, several organisations dealing with malpractice in youth sports have emerged in Sweden.

Children's Ombudsman [Barnombudsmannen]

In Sweden children and youth up to the age of 18 have their own representative – an ombudsman. The Children's Ombudsman is appointed by the Swedish Government for a term of six years.[16] The Ombudsman's main duty is to promote the rights and interests of children and young people as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC).[17]

The agency monitors the implementation of the CRC in Sweden. For instance, the Ombudsman submits bills for legislative changes to the Government and promotes the application of the CRC in the work of government agencies, municipalities and county councils. The agency also disseminates information on the Convention.

A key duty of the Children's Ombudsman is to participate in public debate, promote public interest regarding key issues, and influence the attitudes of decision-makers and the public. However, the Ombudsman does not supervise other authorities and, by law, may not interfere in individual cases.

In order to find out the views and opinions of youth and children the Ombudsman maintains regular contact with children and young people. The Ombudsman visits schools and youth clubs, and they can get in touch with the Ombudsman by letter, phone and through a website. Each year the Children's Ombudsman submits a report to the Government. This report addresses the situation of children and young people in Sweden, for example their opportunities and problems.[18] The Children´s Ombudsman does not take over the duties carried out by the voluntary organisations in the field.

The Children's Ombudsman is empowered to request from individual government agencies, municipal and country authorities information about what they are doing in their activities to ensure compliance with the CRC. Furthermore, the Children's Ombudsman is empowered to summon government agencies, municipal and county authorities for discussions.[19] The Convention on the Rights of the Child could easily be linked to the shortcomings in youth sport, and for that reason, the Children's Ombudsman may become increasingly involved in the promotion of "the best interest of the child".

16 The current Ombudsman, Lena Nyberg, was appointed in 2001 and is in charge of the Office of the Children's Ombudsman.

17 The first Swedish Children's Ombudsman was appointed on July 1, 1993. The issue of appointing a special spokesman for children and young people had been discussed in Sweden's Parliament on a number of occasions through the 1980s and into the early 1990s.

18 http://www.bo.se/Adfinity.aspx?pageid=85 2005-10-26

19 http://www.bo.se/Adfinity.aspx?pageid=89 2005-10-26

Children's Rights in Society [Barnens rätt i samhället, BRIS]

Children's Rights in Society, *BRIS*, is a non-profit, non-governmental Swedish organization free from political and religious affiliations, which helps children suffering from different forms of abuse and misconduct. The organization is a link between children, adults and society, and aims at influencing opinions among decision-makers and people in general, and to make adults more respectful towards children.

The organisation plays an important part in making the position of children and youth stronger in society, and improving their conditions in life, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by maintaining and improving the dialogue between children and adults. The organisation supports children and looks upon them as their principals. Through a telephone helpline and the "BRIS-email", children up to the age of 18 can get in touch with specially trained staff, anonymous free of charge. Children's Rights in Society uses the information thus received as a tool to bring attention to the needs of children. In addition, adults who need to talk about problems involving children have a similar helpline.

Founded in 1971, the organisation has its head office in Stockholm and five branch offices throughout Sweden. Every office has employees and voluntary staff that have worked with children and have passed the organisation's in-service training. Many years of contact with troubled children have given the organisation a profound knowledge with which to tackle the problems efficiently and to defend the rights of children.

Several youths have presented testimonies of "misconduct in sport", by mail or phone calls to *BRIS*. In this respect, the organisation plays an important role in the reduction of malpractice in youth sport, not least because of its solid legitimacy among people in general.

Friends

Friends was founded in 1997 by Sara Damber, who was harassed in school until one of her classmates had enough and told the bullies to stop. Consequently, the organisation believes that students are important and that they can make a difference. The organisation wants children to be safe, and free from harassment or violation of any kind. That all people have the right to have a friend is another basic point of departure in the policy.

The organisation educates children and adults how to handle harassment and all forms of violation. They provide tools to change attitudes and self-esteem that can be used in the fight against mistreatment in schools. But the goal is to lessen harassment and violation against children in the whole of society.[20]

Sport clubs in Sweden are not particularly acquainted with *Friends* and what they stand for.[21] For that reason, the organization wants to learn more about how sport clubs work.

20 The work is manly situated at schools. The organisation first offers all employed at the school an education about harassments and how to work against and prevent it. Together they will find a mutual and positive standpoint in order to make a policy. Afterwards the staff of Friends will meet all the students to inform them about the problem; to make the students aware of the problem of harassment. Albeit awareness, the students must also consider prejudices in general, in order to work as representatives for the organization, so called "friend-supporters". Selected students are educated on harassment; how to comfortably act and react.

21 However, in the fall of 2003 Friends started to collaborate with a big youth soccer club in Stockholm witch had had problems with bullying. This lead to the start of three years long project, called "Friends sports". Friends created a model that could be used on sport clubs who wanted to educate their coaches, leaders and members on how to take notice of and deal with harassment. Friends noticed that there was

Sport clubs are not organized like schools; members of sport clubs participate by choice, and will probably end the membership if they're being harassed. Furthermore, clubs often fail to pay attention to why people resign their memberships. In school, children are obligated to attend for ten years.

Traditionally sports clubs are considered to do a lot of good in Sweden: they enable young and old people to meet, help with integration, teach democratic values, and so on. Therefore, the less positive aspects of sports are easily neglected. *Friends* has noticed that sport clubs are less motivated to talk about harassment and less willing to see the problems that do exist. The government does not put the same pressure on sport clubs as it does on schools. The organisation wants to work as an "eye-opener". By making clubs realise the importance of healthy attitudes and the use of non-discriminatory language, they hope to purify the milieu of youth sport. By educating coaches, leaders and members, comparable to what is done in schools, the aim is to support a milieu in which young people are protected from the shortcomings of sports.

allFair

allFair – which started after a nine-year-old girl asked her mother "why do only children have to be fair, and not the grownups" – operates mainly as an interest group in questions regarding sport ethics and fair play.

Fair play is important, and *allFair* has come up with a concept, the allFair-concept, which is distinguished by its comprehensive view of games and/or tournaments, a conception that includes coaches, leaders, active players and parents/spectators. It is not only the players and coaches that have the responsibility for fair play; on the contrary, the responsibility is shared with adults and spectators alike.

Important questions *allFair* asks concern the role models of children, and it wants to make a difference by focusing on aspects such as

- sports are mainly for fun.
- competing should be taken seriously, but is not a question of life or death (for players as well as supporters).
- people from different clubs and teams should take part as friends.
- a team playing by the rules can win a game.
- a team is allowed to lose with dignity.

It is not enough to teach children the idea of fair play. Instead, adults have to demonstrate what the words represent; they have to be role. Thus, it is deemed more appropriate and effective to reward children who play it fair, than to punish those who fail.

Organisations, sport clubs, teams and individuals have shown interest in using parents and spectators for improving the standard of fair play. In this way, allFair influences the behaviour of adults, and, consequently, reduces parental pressure and expectations on children in sports.

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little research made about harassment and violation in sports. There for they started a survey (4 000 answers) that will be finished in the beginning of next year.

KFUK-KFUM Fair Play and Global Engagement (YWCA/YMCA)

In Sweden, YWCA and YMCA (KFUK-KFUM) work as one movement, and have several alliances. KFUK-KFUM Sweden is an "organization for young people by young people". All activities are based on the wants and needs of the participants.[22] It is essential for KFUK-KFUM that all of its members (more than 70,000) perceive themselves as "important" and "happy" in the organization. Sports, scouting, camps, recreation centres and international development cooperation are the main programs in Sweden.

The sport alliance is the largest alliance within KFUK-KFUM, with more than 45,000 members. They educate leaders and organize national and international events. Sport is not just about results. Regardless if the participants are aiming for the Olympics, or just want to improve their health by exercising, everyone is welcome to join in. Basketball, volleyball, table tennis, handball, orienteering and floor ball are some of the most popular sports that the sport alliance arranges.[23]

KFUK-KFUM runs international projects supported by the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, SIDA,[24] with countries in Africa, South and Central America, Russia, Belorus and the Baltic states. In the spring of 2004, the port alliance started a project called *Global Engagement and Fair Play* for everyone involved with sports. It gives the opportunity to get involved in international engagements and broaden the perspectives of the use of sports. The project shows how sport can be used as a tool for development work, such as working with questions of HIV/Aids, democracy and human rights.

The project has, for instance, led to a "local to local collaboration" between a basketball club in Sweden and Orongo, a small town in Kenya.[25] Some of the team members travelled to Orongo to establish closer contact with the local inhabitants, and thereby get information about HIV/Aids, and how to spread the information, and how basketball can be used as a tool in this work. Even though the differences are considerable between the people of Orongo and a team from Sweden, they have something in common, namely basketball.

By focusing on global engagement, the policy of KFUK-KFUM might even influence the local standards by acting "internationally at home", and in this light receive an open-minded attitude towards human rights in general, locally as well as globally.

Dilemmas in youth sports in general

The various organisations working to promote the rights of children in sports have to operate against (1) functional, (2) developmental, and (3) moral dilemmas and the predicaments of sport.

22 The National Council offers support to local associations in questions of ideology, information and international development cooperations. It is an umbrella organization with comprehensive responsibility for all programs. It links KFUK-KFUM to the world organizations of YWCA and YMCA.

23 www.kfuk-kfum.se

24 A government agency under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=160 2005-10-27

25 Orongo is a small town close to the city Kisumu. The area suffers from HIV/aids and approximately 40% of the people have the virus. In Orongo 52 widows takes care of 250 orphans, children who has lost their parents because of the disease.

Functional Dilemmas

In order to understand the prerequisite of youth sport, we must stress the fact that youth sports have arrived and developed in the wake of adult sport during the last thirty years. The image of [youth] sport in general, as a result, is almost a carbon copy of adult sports, particularly as a reflection of sport at top level.[26] In this respect, the norms and rules of youth sport are formed in the light of adult sport, and are, consequently, hard to change and adapt to the physiological,[27] psychological, and social development of children or youth.

In a historical perspective, contests appear as universal, and signify "culture". Individuals have tested and experienced their strength, speed, cleverness, acuity, artistry and courage in different forms of contests, particularly in competitions against an individual or a team. By a victory something more is realized than the triumph, namely "an image of superiority". In order to be regarded and honoured as "superior", individuals have to compete, which has nothing to do with morality, egoism versus altruism, and so on. On the contrary, it is an existential theme, natural to history and culture.[28] Nevertheless, the pursuit of superiority through competition can be *interpreted* as a moral concern, as in youth sport.

Sport as a contest is a familiar image by which youth sport is reproduced. Participating in sport means that the individual becomes part of the "phenomenology of sport", which implies that the functional norms of competition and rivalry, together with the ideas of fair play and equal conditions, must be taken seriously. Aiming for the ultimate performance must govern all individuals who seriously participate in sport.[29] The phenomenology of sport – which is a functional logic, not a moral subject – is the basis to which the moral discourse – i.e., "too much seriousness, and too little play" – must be related.

Developmental dilemmas

Even though sport is supposed to improve health, physical strength, and the psychological and social status of individuals, it might have dangerous repercussions when applied to young people.

In order to do well, regardless of age, when participation in sport training, individuals are supposed to exert considerable concentration, to cope with physical demands and exhaustion, and sometimes even to eat special diets. In this regard, sport appears to be a tough life style.[30] Accordingly, we have in recent years observed an increased number of young participants who have become burnt out as a result of intensive physical exercise or psychological pressure. Concurrently, in connection to an increasing emphasis on diet in the sporting milieu, numerous youths are suffering from eating disorders, particularly in

26 Carlsson, Bo & Fransson, Kristin (2005) Regler och tävlingssystem i barn- och tidig ungdomsidrott. [Systems of Rules and Games in Children and Youth Sport.] Report to the Swedish Sports Confederation.

27 We have to mention damages on the skeleton due to cases of intensive training. Besides, women gymnastic athletes commonly receive their first menstruation after ending their sport carriers.

28 Huizinga, Johan (2000) Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Routledge. To quote in extension: "From the life of childhood right up to the highest achievements of civilization one of the strongest incentives to perfection, both individual and social, is the desire to be praised and honoured for one's excellence. In praising another each praises himself. We want to be honoured for our virtues. We want the satisfaction of having done something well. Doing something well means doing it better than others. In order to excel one must prove one's excellence; in order to merit recognition, merit must be made manifest. Competition serves to give proof of superiority. p. 63.
http://site.ebrary.com/lib/malmoe/Doc?id=10017348&page=73"

29 Lindfelt, Mikael (1999) Idrott och moral [Sport and Moral]. Doxa.

30 Parents as well as coaches normally advocate the free choice of children and youth, claiming it hard to stop children themselves from intensifying the training frequency. Cf., Paulo, op. cit., n. 1.

sports that are guided by aesthetics or weight classes, such as gymnastics, figure skating, wrestling and weight-lifting.[31]

Why should children compete at all if it jeopardizes their development? Research has indicated that children at the age of seven have no conception of the meaning of competition.[32] Besides, children at the age of ten are not able to distinguished between effort and ability, and consequently believe that defeat is a result of insufficient effort and preparation.

As a result, training, rules and games should be adjusted to the physical development and motivation of children and youth, with a focus on play rather than competition, medals and positions,[33] at least until they are fourteen years of age.[34]

Still, competition is a central aspect of our history and culture,[35] especially in light of the sportification of modern society.[36]

Moral Dilemmas

Competition and its potential negative impact on youth sport is not the only dilemma in relation to sport. Dependency, exclusion and selection, and sport extremisms are other moral issues that gradually have become more visible, due to media coverage, professionalisation of sport as well as different interest groups.

Sport, as mentioned, is supposed to integrate individuals in society. In this perspective, various forms such as exclusion and selection mechanisms, inherent in the practice of sports, are morally wrong.[37]

Thus it is no surprise that coaches and leaders in youth sports have additional power, which logically also affect the mutual relationship. In the course of training and competition, children and youth spend a lot of time with adults, and coaches might run the risk of turning into "surrogate parents". Different forms of harmful dependencies, and even sexual harassment,[38] are obvious threats due to an intensive relationship between sporting youth and leaders. These problems highlight the need for a greater professionalism, and, principally, professional ethics in Swedish sport leaders, apart from their voluntarily commitment,

Besides, adults have a notion of sport, a notion that is formed by supporting and applauding sports at an elite level, which is transferred to young people, and youths are thereby perceived as small adults,[39] and consequently, similar pressures and expectations are put on training, performance and results.

We can also find parents and coaches in Sweden and other countries that regard extensive physical training as a vital component in successful training, even at an early age.

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31 In the Olympics in Athens, the bronze in women weight-lifting was won by an American girl at the age of sixteen, which means, no doubt, that her training had started in fairly prematurely years

32 Paulo, op. cit., n. 1. Adults frequently shape competitive sport around the concept of winning by duplicating adult sports models […] Does an athlete aged seven or nine years really need to compete at these levels? Do sport official know whether this corresponds to a real need among child athletes, or is it simply a selfish aspiration among adults?" op. cit., n. 1, pp. 230-1.

33 Carlsson & Fransson, op cit., n. 16.

34 Paulo, op. cit., n. 1.

35 Huizinga, op. cit.

36 Dunning, Eric (2000) Sport Matters. Polity Press.

37 Peterson, Tomas (2005)

38 Olga Korbut, e.g., has told her story of being "sexual slave" to her coach. Cf., Paulo, op. cit., n. 1.

39 Carlsson & Fransson, op cit., n. 16.

On the other hand, the moral discourse holds rigorous physical exercise as a form of child abuse. In sport we might find other types of physical abuse, for instance when coaches utilize extra training as a form of punishment, in relation to failures and disappointments, or supporting the idea that in order to win, sport must hurt and pain is to be expected.[40]

The culture and the lifestyle of sport run the risk of being too absorbing for children and youth, particularly in light of expectations from coaches and parents. The lack of rest and the limited time for other interests, and indeed for school, endanger the psychological, social and cultural development of children and youth, which is contrary to the ideology of sport impact. In this perspective, sport extremism, in our view, contains a moral dilemma.

Consequently, the work and the operations of organisations and interest groups such as "Children's Rights in Society" (BRIS), "Friends", "allFair" and "KFUK/KFUM's Fair Play and Global Engagement", are crucial in order to contrast the positive impact of sport with a moral reflection concerning "the best interest of the child" and the conditions of participation in sport.

Children's rights in *global* sport

Human rights have generally developed into a central subject, and sports and human rights are essentially tied to each other, at least ideologically. Sport is considered as a tool for reducing discrimination, for strengthening youth, and for promoting peace, tolerance and friendship. Furthermore, sports provide individuals with health, recreation and rehabilitation. However, we have observed forms of unprofessional conduct in sport that distort the positive impression of and attitudes towards sport in general. Sport has been known to neglect human rights, despite the ideological foundation of sport in equality and fairness.

A growing emphasis on human rights in youth sport will provide organisations and interest groups with an instructional perspective, which will enable them to respond actively and decisively to child abuse in various forms, locally as well as internationally.

More importantly, a growing number of youth clubs in Sweden appear to be involved in different kinds of missions and global commitments in relation to sport. By focusing on global inequity and grievances, individuals will become increasingly aware of inequalities and injustices, which eventually will affect the attitudes towards misconduct, abuse and harassment in sport as well as in society in general.

In conclusion, the problem under investigation, and its resolution in light of human rights, calls for a global perspective and a global commitment in order to sufficiently capture local problems in relation to sport.

40 Paulo, op. cit., n. 1