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Ethical Aspects of Health and Wellbeing of Young Elite Athletes

Conceptual and Normative Issues

Abstract

Sport and physical activities offer a sensitive environment where the values of humanity, human rights, empathy and fair play come to the fore. However, at the same time the competition nature of sport and the interest of winning at any cost represent a risks of harm, especially for young preadolescent athletes. Therefore, the need arises to identify the main ethical conceptual and normative issues of the top youth sport. Our critical review of possible risk factors and empirical findings of semi-structured in-depth interviews with four top-level gymnastics' coaches showed that achievements of children in sport are the result of multiple factors driven by the main force of the ethics of maximum behind. Gymnasts' intrinsic motivation, pleasure to sport, persistent hard work, start at early age, and the role of parents are essential for success. However, the morality of the coach as a reflection of society values should be carefully considered in the future.

Keywords

ethics of sport, talent development, exploitation of children, artistic gymnastics, Youth Olympic Games, ethics of society, qualitative study

Introduction

“Every elite achievement inevitably needs dreams that overtake the natural course of events. Dreams open the space of possibilities, which are not visible in a given situation, and open the gap between the objective and the subjective time.”¹

Sports and physical activities can offer a very encouraging and beneficial environment where the values of humanity, human rights, empathy and fair play come into the fore. Nevertheless, McNamee emphasised that children's rights are one of the most important ethical issues in the field of top-level sport. Success in a sport many times relies on external prosperity such as money, fame or media popularity, and they all have negative consequences for ethical norms in youth sports.² Škerbić emphasised that the exploitation

¹ Jelica Šumič-Riha, “Ali je drugačen svet mogoč?”, *Filozofski vestnik* 34 (2013) 1, pp. 47–74, pp. 54–55.

² Mike McNamee, “Ethics and Sport”, in: Mike McNamee, William J. Morgan (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*, Routledge, London – New York 2015, pp. 131–141.

of children is one of the biggest and most important questions in the ethics of sport and the broader field of philosophy in sport, along with the ethical issues such as doping, fair play, high tech equipment, commercialisation of sport, corruption and equality of gender.³ Similarly, Zagorac stressed that features, methodology, and subject areas of the philosophy of sport are self-critical and exposed to criticism. Thereby, the philosophical analysis is more confidently and decisively entering the discourse on sport, addressing problems such as discrimination, exploitation, frivolous commercialisation, thematisation of heroism, victory and means to achieve success, risks taking, body manipulation, and economic and political impacts that all surround the arena of gladiators in the new era.⁴

Zagorac emphasised that sport as an intersection of historical, culturological, political and social flows tries to find a balance between dilemmas of individual and collective, private and public, recreational and professional, between pain and happiness, success and failure, and between ceremony, ritual and play.⁵ Following this perspective, we can argue that sport, like any physical activity, regardless their intensity or competitiveness, represents on one side the area of human activity with an ideal values such as fairness, justice, equal opportunities, respect among performers, winning and losing with dignity, and as such promotes the excellence of the virtues of humankind. Beside those positive effects, sport, particularly in its competitive forms, can represent the environment of risk for child's health and development. In such an environment of upbringing, young athletes may face a negative experience without taking into consideration their integrity, developmental or health needs.⁶ Loland claims that all these positive values turn in the negative direction when sport becomes a struggle for prestige and profit by all possible means such as doping, corruption and violence.⁷ For example, Hanson very well presented how the "International Federation of Sports Medicine Code of Ethics" does not go along with the reality of competitive sport.⁸ He highlighted more potentially conflicting obligations of sports team physicians. He addressed dual loyalty and the conflict of interest that they encounter with physicians in sports medicine:

"Though responsible for the medical care of the athletes as individuals, they also have obligations to the team that employs them which can include returning athletes to play who are at heightened risk of re-injury."⁹

A professional athlete can risk current and future¹⁰ loss of health for current success. The athlete's decision is principally autonomous. However, the question is how this decision was chosen in respect to the athletes' awareness of the health risks and safety to obtain the desired achievement at a certain competition. In sports history, numerous examples reveal the regret of athletes when they were seriously injured, when they severely damaged their health and couldn't continue their sports career. At that point, all their sense of life dedicated to a single path with all the accompanying sacrifices to achieve results, success, and glory are seen in a broader, longer-view perspective. Many of them honestly spoke about their case to the public. For example, one of the most mysterious, regrettable and tragic is the case of Elena Mukhina (1960–2006).¹¹ Mukhina was a Soviet gymnast, who won the all-around world championship in 1978 and was the leading athlete of the Soviet women's artistic gymnastics team for the Summer Olympics 1980 in Moscow. Just two weeks before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, she injured her neck spine and became permanently quadriplegic. Although the real cause of her injury and serious condition was trying to remain secretive by the So-

viet Gymnastics Federation,¹² the truth came out. During her floor exercise at training, Mukhina was performing the Thomas somersault when she under-rotated the element and was not able to land properly. She failed and crash-landed on her chin, injuring her spine. In the interview eight years after the injury, she took a critical standpoint to the Soviet gymnastics program and a system, which was oriented only at winning the gold medals without regard to the athlete's wellbeing:

“The injury was inevitable. Not necessarily, that it had to happen on that day. I think they'd even have carried me off the competition floor. Because I just wasn't able to do that element. (...) Especially since I had broken my take-off leg at a competition in 1979 and was doing the somersault badly. But the race was on – the Olympics were coming up. The doctors? What about the doctors. They aren't there to serve health, but to serve sports. (...) I was injured because everyone around me was observing neutrality and keeping silent. After all, they saw that I wasn't ready to perform that element. But they kept quiet. Nobody stopped a person who, forgetting everything, was tearing forward – go, go, go!”¹³

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Matija Mato Škerbić, “Etika sporta kao novi nastavni predmet?”, *Metodički ogledi* 21 (2014) 1, pp. 47–66, p. 59.

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Ivana Zagorac, “Uvodnik: Filozofija slobodnog vremena i sporta I”, *Filozofska istraživanja* 29 (2009) 2, pp. 243–244.

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Ibid.

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Cf. Michel Léglise, *The Protection of Young People Involved in High-Level Sport*, Council of Europe – Committee for the Development of Sports, Strasbourg 1997; Misia Gervis, Nicola Dunn, “The Emotional Abuse of Elite Child Athletes by Their Coaches”, *Child Abuse Review* 13 (2004) 3, pp. 215–223, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.843>; Tony Ghaye *et al.*, “When Winning is Not Enough. Learning through Reflections on the ‘Best-self’”, *Reflective Practice* 10 (2009) 3, pp. 385–401, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940903034747>; Tristan Collins, “The Impact of Child Protection on High-Performance British Gymnastics”, in: Celia H. Brackenridge, Tess Kay, Daniel Rhind (eds.), *Sport, Children's Rights and Violence Prevention. A Sourcebook on Global Issues and Local Programmes*, Brunel University Press – Brunel University London, London 2012, pp. 94–98; Maria Papaefstathiou, Daniel Rhind, Celia H. Brackenridge, “Child Protection in Ballet. Experiences and Views of Teachers, Administrators and Ballet Students”, *Child Abuse Review* 22 (2013) 2, pp. 127–141, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2228>; Dennis J. Caine, Keith Russell, Liesbeth Lim (eds.), *Handbook of Sports Medicine and Science. Gymnastics*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Oxford 2013.

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Sigmund Loland, “Fair Play”, in: M. McNamee, W. J. Morgan (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*, pp. 333–350.

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Stephen S. Hanson, “He Didn't Want to Let His Team Down’. The Challenge of Dual Loyalty for Team Physicians”, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 45 (2018) 3, pp. 215–227, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2018.1486199>.

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Ibid., p. 215.

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Ibid., p. 217.

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Oksana Polonskaya, “Yelena Mukhina. Grown-up Games”, *Ogonyok magazine*. Available at: http://www.oocities.org/graf_de_la_fer/mukhina-int.html (accessed on 2 December 2018).

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Yuriy Titov, president of the International Gymnastics Federation at that time, explained the condition of Mukhina to media at the opening of the 1980 Olympic Games. From his statement, it is obvious that Gymnastics Federation postponed all responsibility for the accident to Mukhina – a girl who never had any voice and possibility to contribute and influence any aspect of her training strategy or career decisions. On the reporter question, if she will be able to compete in gymnastics ever again, Titov avoided direct answer of yes or no and pointed out her age of 20 years as a suitable age to approaching retirement from women's artistic gymnastics. This point of view reflects views of the leading people in artistic gymnastics at that time about the age of female athletes and values of keeping the elite women's artistic gymnastics for the sport of young juvenile athletes. – “1980 Olympics Gymnastics Titov on Mukhina Injury”, *Miz-Mamie – Youtube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXBRLPkDDM> (accessed on 2 December 2018).

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O. Polonskaya, “Yelena Mukhina”.

Elena Mukhina very clearly and directly stated what Hanson¹⁴ describes as physicians doping athletes as a consequence of not making health a priority. Whenever sports physicians give a pain injection so that athlete could perform with an injured body, the damage accumulates. In the opposite situation, Hanson claims,¹⁵ the physician should or perhaps even must impose on athletes in the middle of competition not to take actions that may leave them open to (re)injury. If such decision is made in priority of the athlete's health regardless the situation of the competition, team-related interest and possible loss; we are questioning what is the consequence or is that even possible in the elite sport where the winning is everything for athletes, coaches, sports clubs, spectators and nations? Moreover, what is the role of medicine in sport, where all of its action is in contrary to its mission and ethical values? Therefore, do we need an elite sport as a representation of valuable virtues of humankind? As Hanson emphasised:

"...from a purely medical perspective, it is likely that no one should play these sports."¹⁶

Artistic gymnastics and other aesthetic sports such as skating, rhythmic gymnastics, or even ballet have been recognised among the riskiest when facing ethical issues of the well-being of children.¹⁷ Intensive training and complexity of trained elements at very early age should be particularly pointed out in those sports. Intensive training subordinates female athletes to the regime of extreme loads in the pre-adolescence period, placing them at a higher risk of both physical and psychological developmental deficits.¹⁸ For example, women's artistic gymnastics is identified as the youngest group of Olympic medallists across all sports disciplines in the last 40 years.¹⁹ All around the world top-level female gymnasts start their training between the age of five and seven and join the professional gymnastics training at the elite level by the time they turn ten years of age.²⁰ Also, Farstad²¹ found that, even though injuries can occur in any sport, they are especially prevalent among female gymnasts. The main risk factor is their involvement at the top-level sport at a young age. The author wonders whether the commitment to six hours of training daily for six days a week constitutes employment of full-time work, from which all minor children must be protected.

It is visible from the Mukhina case that age is one of the most significant factors of child abuse in sport. The adults have all the power in their hands and play the game behind the young athletes.

"If only we started sports at age 16–18, when a person can consciously choose his path, but at age 9 or 10 we don't see anything around us except sports, in which our interest is so skillfully kindled. It seems to us that it's some kind of special world. We don't yet know how narrow that three-dimensional existence of the gym, home, and competitions is."²²

The same ethical question was emphasised by Lang,²³ who is wondering how healthy is daily sports training for young athletes or whether it is just one of the case of contemporary child abuse that became so accepted and self-evident in the elite sport that we do not notice it any more. Lang emphasised that discussions about normalised regimes of practices of the competitive youth sports should be a matter of strong international debate. Particular attention should be given to the competitors in sports, who are exposed to hard work from an early age.

With keeping this evidence in mind, we designed an empirical study with which we attempted to understand and explain the system of creating the success of pre-adolescent girls in top-level artistic gymnastics. The focus of our interest was the ethical aspects of the health and wellbeing of young elite athletes in gymnastics as a consequence of intensive training from the preschool

period, competitions in childhood and teenage winners of the largest international trophies. In the empirical part of the study, the voice was given to the coaches, their experiences and interpretations of everyday life in top-level women's artistic gymnastics. We were wondering about how the process is happening in reality and who is behind the system of child exploitation aimed to achieve success in the top-level sport?

Ethical principles and normative issues of the elite youth sport

In the narrow sense, the ethics is defined as a matter of general principles or even rules of behaviour, and more broadly includes also judgements and decisions, causes and feelings.²⁴ Ethical perspective is described by “striving for the real life with others, and for others within the equitable institutions”.²⁵ Grmič stated that ethical norms derive from a free will and give individuals the freedom to make decisions for something, and at the same time take responsibility for their decisions. The question arises, what kind of impacts are present on an individual's will to decide for this or another way between the various possibilities regarding their knowledge, judgement and interests.²⁶ We claim that this aspect is even more in the focus when we are approaching the ethical dilemmas in the field of sport.

When we are defining the ethics in sport, “we can generally say that it is the application of widely known moral values in various sporting situations, and sport in general”.²⁷ In the words of sports philosopher Hosta, “the sport ethics

14 S. S. Hanson, “‘He Didn’t Want to Let His Team Down’”, pp. 219–220.

15 Ibid., p. 219.

16 Ibid., pp. 219–220.

17 M. Papaefstathiou, D. Rhind, C. H. Brackenridge, “Child Protection in Ballet”, pp. 127–141.

18 D. J. Caine, K. Russell, L. Lim, *Handbook of Sports Medicine and Science. Gymnastics*, pp. 17–27.

19 “Topics of the Times. Gymnastic Girls, Not Women”, *The New York Times* (1 August 1989).

20 Ian R. Tofler *et al.*, “Physical and Emotional Problems of Elite Female Gymnasts”, *The New England Journal of Medicine* 335 (1996) 4, pp. 281–283, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejm199607253350412>.

21 Siri Farstad, *Protecting Children's Rights in Sport. The Use of Minimum Age* (master thesis), University of Fribourg, Fribourg 2006.

22 O. Polonskaya, “Yelena Mukhina”.

23 Melanie Lang, “Intensive Training in Youth Sports. A New Abuse of Power?”, in: Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte, Melanie Lang (eds.), *Bullying and the Abuse of Power. Critical Issues, Inter-Disciplinary Press*, Oxford 2010, pp. 57–64.

24 Mary Warnock, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Ethics*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London 1998, pp. 1–128.

25 Paul Ricœur, *Sebe kot drugega*, translated by Nastja Skrušny Babin, KUD Apokalipsa, Ljubljana 2011, p. 258.

26 Vekoslav Grmič, “Motivacija etičnih norm”, in: Ludvik Toplak (ed.), *Profesionalna etika pri delu z ljudmi*, Univerza v Mariboru – Inštitut Antona Trstenjaka za psihologijo, logoterapijo in antropohigieno v Ljubljani, Maribor 1996, pp. 15–24.

27 Morana Brkljačić, “Fair Play as Moral Category for the Games”, in: Matija Mato Škerbić (ed.), *1st International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, Croatian Philosophical Society, Zagreb – Varaždin 2018, p. 25.

is given the chance to uncover deeply rooted patterns that govern sport”.²⁸ We strongly agree with his argument that sport is a very complex phenomenon, which generates numerous of ethical dilemmas. Hosta separated them into two major perspectives between which the sport is trapped:

“On the one hand, it is pinned between moral-educational and essential-biological movement needs. On the other hand, it is trapped between the extreme exploitation and passionate images of postmodern times, and the playful innocence of body and mind.”²⁹

However, in sport we do not have only one ethics, but the pluralism of sport ethics which arise from the pluralism of sports practices, as was pointed by Hosta.³⁰ For example, one of the highlighted concepts that characterised the ethics of sport is “fair play”. Renson claims that fair play represents the moral creed of modern sports ethos, which was a cultural product of modernity. Renson stated a thesis that fair play was advocated for survival in rough games played among equals. With the Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympic Movement, the concept of fair play was spread around the world and made a significant contribution to both the ethics of sport and contemporary ethics in general. Without fair play, sports and also other competitive endeavours (e.g. classical music, science, education) might become a mere matter of winning at all costs.³¹ Hosta is discussing fair play in terms of morality in sport.³² Norms of behaviour, codes of conduct, regulative games rules, and attached sanctions are all dealing with morality in sport. Hosta explains it from two different perspectives, one is the perspective of motivational focus, competitive tension and will to win, and the other one is dealing with the ethos of sport.³³ Both perspectives will be more closely discussed later on findings of our empirical study.

The basic law of top-level sports is the law of victory. This could be understood in a way that the victory is the only thing that matters and the means to reach it keeps all the borders open. Therefore, the concept of the Modern Olympic Games raises complex issues. On the one hand, a moment of education or physical culture is reflected as a fundamental condition of maintaining health and promoting the development of every individual. On the other hand, the sport’s elite reflects an excessive meaning and rationalises pain and injuries to such an extent that the state of disciplinary rigour is normalised.³⁴ The stated leads to a conclusion that the ethics of maximum justifies every elite sport. Ethics of maximum as the ethics of infinite always exceeds new boundaries and as such from the unachievable creates new possibilities that seemed unreachable until they finally become only one of the possible options.³⁵ Šumič-Riha claims that the ethics of maximum that is still dominant in most areas of human functioning does not serve the needs of globalisation in the best way.³⁶ Therefore, the emergence of new ethics, which will slowly overcome the existing one, could be expected in the future.

Finally, based on the understanding of contemporary sport as the first cosmopolitan civil society institution and consequently explaining the contemporary ethics of sport in the context of contemporary global transitions, Kreft developed the innovative three types of the ethics of sport, named by *ethics of duty*, *ethics of grace*, and *ethics of hope*.³⁷ Each of them the author explains as follows:

“First, there is an ethics of duty, with intrinsic values of sport competition which is condensed into rules and safeguards sport’s ludic character. Its core is equality and the respect that every person owes to oneself and to others. Second, sport, as any other human activity, has its ethics of grace which covers what one does not owe to the others, but, nevertheless, offers as a surplus over the limits of duty; in sport, this is called fair-play. Third, there is an ethics of hope which

is to insure that humanity has an *a priori* right to hope for the better, at least in terms of culture, if not in terms of happiness.”³⁸

Kreft justified that contemporary sport calls for all three aspects of sport ethics. The transition of social values from the ethics of progress to the ethics of care for humanity requires, besides the ethics of sport competition, rules, regulations and fair play also the ethics of hope. In the future, the ethics of hope must serve as a driver of humankind development. Similar principles can be identified in the ethics of minimum, defined by Šumič-Riha.³⁹ She claims that ethics of minimum could better serve today’s universe. The ethics of minimum is less ambitious but at the same time more realistic with the main task of safeguarding the life and safety of every individual from any harm. Both the ethics of minimum by Šumič-Riha and as well the ethics of hope by Kreft are the ethics of solidarity, respect of human rights, communication and collaboration in society and the justice for every individual.

When discussing ethical principles and normative issues of the elite youth sport, pedagogical ethics come to the fore. Pedagogical ethics deals with the notion of childhood, changes in the concepts through history, and the attitude of society towards the child.⁴⁰ Parallel to the changes in the concept of childhood, various educational techniques and related approaches to disciplining children were developed.⁴¹ For example, Foucault defines the time for education as a special form of time in which the child passes through different levels, which vary according to the level of complexity of the tasks.⁴² Through the entire educational history, educational time is managed and controlled by adults. The adult control over the child, which mostly represents teachers and parents, includes control over the child’s personality and attitudes towards

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Milan Hosta, “Ethics and Sport. Whose Ethics, Which Ethos. A Prolegomenon”, *Kinesiology* 40 (2008) 1, pp. 89–95.

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Ibid., p. 89.

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Ibid.

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Roland Renson, “Fair Play. Its Origins and Meanings in Sport and Society”, *Kinesiology* 41 (2009) 1, pp. 5–18.

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Milan Hosta, “Etična odgovornost strokovnih delavcev v fitnesu”, in: Boris Sila (ed.), *Zbornik prispevkov IV. Kongresa, Fitnes zveze Slovenije*, Ljubljana 2006, pp. 29–32.

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M. Hosta, “Ethics and Sport”, p. 91.

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Milan Hosta, *Etika športa. Manifest za 21. stoletje*, Univerza v Ljubljani – Fakulteta za šport – Inštitut za šport, Ljubljana 2007.

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Jelica Šumič-Riha, *Mutacije etike. Od utopije sreče do neozdravljive resnice*, Založba ZRC – Filozofski inštitut Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra SAZU, Ljubljana 2002; Jelica Šumič-Riha, “Ko je avtoriteta brez jamstva in

pravilo brez opore... in ko literatura postane učiteljica filozofije”, *Literatura* 24 (2012) 250, pp. 302–319.

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J. Šumič-Riha, *Mutacije etike*, pp. 302–319.

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Lev Kreft, “From Kant to Contemporary Ethics of Sport”, in: Matija Mato Škerbič (ed.), *Ist International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, Croatian Philosophical Society, Zagreb – Varaždin 2018, p. 34.

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Ibid.

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J. Šumič-Riha, “Ko je avtoriteta brez jamstva in pravilo brez opore... in ko literatura postane učiteljica filozofije”, pp. 302–319.

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Renata Salecl, *Disciplina kot pogoj svobode*, Založba Krtina, Ljubljana 2010; Michel Foucault, *Nadzorovanje in kaznovanje. Nastanek zapora*, translated by Drago B. Rotar, Založba Krtina, Ljubljana 2004.

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R. Salecl, *Disciplina kot pogoj svobode*.

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M. Foucault, *Nadzorovanje in kaznovanje*.

their knowledge and moral norms. Powerful entities that applied a system of control over children in today's society are social services and educational institutions.⁴³ According to this argument, we can conclude that the influential mechanism in the field of sport, which refers in particular to educational programs for the development of young sports talents, is at least that strong or even more powerful in controlling and disciplining their bodies and minds. The adults, such as spectators, sports federations, clubs and coaches have all the means in their hands and manage the development of sports culture and career of athletes. In the example presented earlier, considering a Soviet gymnast Elena Mukhina, it is possible to see how elite sports system manipulates with athletes. The young athletes seem even more powerless, like a marionette, where many parties are pulling strings. Therefore, it is not surprising that several authors emphasised the need to develop specialised training courses to increase the awareness and empower young athletes and educate their coaches on ethical dilemmas in elite sport.

Sports philosopher Škerbić designed and proposed a syllabus of a new teaching subject "Ethics of Sport" which could be implemented in the curricula of sports gymnasium, trainer schools and at universities.⁴⁴ The subject consists of 35 hours, and it is intended to be an elective content regardless of the year of the study. Development of self-knowledge, reflection and critical thinking with a special emphasis on the reflection of sports phenomena are just some of the most important purposes of the course, which will contribute to developing of student's cognitive abilities for evaluation of evidence, comparative and causative-consequences analysis and interpretations, and constructing strong arguments for conclusions, views and opinions.⁴⁵ In the development of innovative syllabus, the author referred to the previous knowledge in the field of philosophy of sport. The significant contribution which showed innovation and originality of the syllabus is the inclusion of the three different ethics, namely the syllabus elaborates on deontological ethics (the topic of conscience in sport), aretaic ethics (favourable virtues in sport), and consequentialist ethics (questioning of different utilitarian-based actions). Moreover, the author brings to the foreground the variety of ethics considering in different sports. Namely, he argues that every sport has its inherent ethical problems and challenges. The advantages of the proposed curriculum model are, on one side, dealing with the ethics of particular sports and specific moral issues they entail, and on the other side, referring to the main and basic ethical issues of sport such as doping and fair play.⁴⁶ Brkljačić and Čurko also emphasised the need for ethical education. Brkljačić⁴⁷ stated that any education of the future or current athletes should result in their physical development, and equally in their mental and moral development because academic and sports education are acting under the principle of complementarity. Furthermore, Čurko⁴⁸ emphasised that early ethical and value education should include bioethical education based on strategies of critical thinking.

Health and wellbeing of young elite athletes: a game between genetics and society

In the study of Gustafsson *et al.*⁴⁹ was found out that 1% to 9% of athletes is showing increased burnout syndrome, equivalently represented in team sports and individual sports. Moreover, the study showed that the amount of training was not a singular factor that mostly contributed to burnout syndrome. Therefore, the reasons for the loss of health and wellbeing of young athletes

we need to explain in the combination of different factors. Previous studies revealed the following categories of risks factors which may occur in elite sports when it is performing by pre-adolescent children and youths:

- *Age*: the younger the child is when entering the elite training/competitions, the higher is the risk;⁵⁰
- *Cooperation and close communication with the coach*: manipulation, lack of or one-way communication, and other inappropriate forms of relationship with an athlete, all increase the risk;⁵¹
- *Knowledge of the coach*: especially knowledge of the principles of child development, general didactics, special didactics of physical education and gymnastics, medical, biomedical and social aspects of kinesiology sciences, and pedagogical and sports ethics reduce the risk;⁵²
- *Role of parents*: achievement through an intermediary and transfer of wishes and unrealised ambitions from adults (e.g. parents, coaches) on the child increase the risk;⁵³
- *Demands of society*: demands for elite achievements from the coach, parents, and sports club or even the country, are all over the needs of the child and work in contrary to the principles of integrated development, to the preservation of health, and ensuring the integrity and safety for the athlete.⁵⁴

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R. Salecl, *Disciplina kot pogoj svobode*, pp. 111–113.

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M. M. Škerbić, “Etika sporta kao novi nastavni predmet?”, pp. 47–66.

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Ibid., pp. 52–53.

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Ibid., pp. 60–63.

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M. Brkljačić, “Fair Play as Moral Category for the Games”, p. 25.

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Bruno Ćurko, “Early Bioethical Education, Critical Thinking, and Sport”, in: M. M. Škerbić (ed.), *1st International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, p. 26.

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Survey was made on the sample of 980 athletes from 29 different sports disciplines. See: Henrik Gustafsson *et al.*, “Prevalence of Burnout in Competitive Adolescent Athletes”, *Sport Psychologist* 21 (2007) 1, pp. 21–37, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.21.1.21>.

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T. Collins, “The Impact of Child Protection on High-Performance British Gymnastics”, pp. 94–98.

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Jill W. Lassiter, Celia A. Watt, “Student Coaches’ Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Behaviors Regarding the Female Athlete

Triad”, *Physical Educator* 64 (2007) 3, pp. 142–151; T. Ghaye *et al.*, “When Winning is Not Enough”; Bojan Jošt, Janez Vodičar, *Športni učitelj in trener*, Univerza v Ljubljani – Fakulteta za šport, Ljubljana 2014.

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Annick Buchholz *et al.*, “BodySense. An Evaluation of a Positive Body Image Intervention on Sport Climate for Female Athletes”, *Eating Disorders* 16 (2008) 4, pp. 308–321, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10640260802115910>; Vladimir Sruk, “Profesionalna etika učiteljev in vzgojiteljev”, in: L. Toplak (ed.), *Profesionalna etika pri delu z ljudmi*, pp. 143–145; Bogomir Novak, “Položaj učitelja med heteronomno in avtonomno etiko”, *Anthropos* 32 (2000) 1–2, pp. 133–145; John Harris, *Vrednost življenja. Uvod v medicinsko etiko*, Založba Krtina, Ljubljana 2002.

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I. R. Tofler *et al.*, “Physical and Emotional Problems of Elite Female Gymnasts”, pp. 281–283; J. Harris, *Vrednost življenja*; R. Salecl, *Disciplina kot pogoj svobode*.

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B. Jošt, J. Vodičar, *Športni učitelj in trener*; M. Hosta, “Etična odgovornost strokovnih delavcev v fitnesu”, pp. 29–32; J. Šumič-Riha, *Mutacije etike*; Jean-François Lyotard, *Navzkrižje*, translated by Jelica Šumič-Riha, Založba ZRC – Filozofski inštitut Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra SAZU, Ljubljana 2003.

Today's top-level sport and their main actors – the athletes – are the subject of manipulation. One of the strongest arguments is the expansion of genetic testing to recruit talented children for a particular sport. However, Camporesi stressed that evidence of such tests has not yet been proven. Irrespective, more than a thousand parents and coaches have already used it. Genetic testing addressing potential customers with an advantage of early information about the child's genetic predisposition for a certain sport, and in later sports developments for the planning of training and conditional programs that will provide the best way to build a champion.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Korać states that besides detecting genes responsible for various phenotypes of performance, there are also “gene therapies” available with the ability to enhance athletic performance.⁵⁶ This is very dangerous, warns Camporesi. Namely, genetic tests are financially accessible and are easily purchase online, but their conclusions about effectiveness are misleading. For example, the lack of experimental testing and without assessing external validity leads to the application of norms, which unjustly and uncritically exclude children from sport and physical activity that is necessary for their development and health. Ultimately, the genetic tests predict only 2% of talents, as emphasised by Camporesi.⁵⁷ In terms of exposed ethical dilemmas, the special field of bioethics in sport was inducted. Škerbić⁵⁸ emphasised that bioethics of sport as a separate discipline within the philosophy of sport use different approaches of consideration, such as Applied (Bio)Medical Ethics, Global Bioethics, or Integrative Bioethics. There are still some issues regarding dividing and separating the bioethics of sport from the ethics of sport.

For the elite achievements in sport we first need a talented athlete and, besides many important factors, also a highly qualified coach who will find the way with the assistance of knowledge, creativity, and their personality to select the methods and means of action which could bring the athlete to the highest sports achievements.⁵⁹ Jošt and Vodičar highlighted that “every athlete is *a priori* the result of their abilities and circumstances of their development”.⁶⁰ Also, the moral traits of coaches are important for the success of training. The work of coaches is ethically very responsible and adheres to the principles of the code of ethics in sport. Namely, the coaches have a strong influence on their athletes, on the one hand, they can cause harm, but on the other hand, they can prevent any negative impacts that are inevitable on the way to the top sports achievements. Following this argument, the coaches are in the ideal position for preventive action and the introduction of early intervention activities to safeguard the health and development of athletes.⁶¹ In any case, we should be aware of the social constructions that build relationships between the coach and the athlete. Such a relationship is, according to Medveš, always a reflection of the social relations of a particular society and relationships within it, and as such represents a means for the realisation of basic social relations and needs.⁶² Similarly, Trstenjak argues that the morality of an individual is strongly dependent on social circumstances and requirements. Social components determine the life of an individual in contemporary civil society. Therefore, the ethics of an individual is also the ethics of society.⁶³

Empirical phenomenological study

From the early stage of life to the end of a sports career, which coincides with the process of young athlete's personal development during childhood and adolescence, the child is included in a unique and highly consistent,

subordinate and specific system of sports training and life. The question arises – what is the price behind the success? Do the elite achievements, glory, awards and grants justify the price that needs to be paid with the consequences in the child's health and bio-psycho-social development? Despite the status of the great stars of the gymnastics all around the world, these are just minor children in the mental and physical sense, who are entering the arena of the elite sport with all the responsibilities and consequences. We believe that safeguarding of personal health and wellbeing of elite young athletes in discourse with the beauty of their performance which brings the happiness and joy to the thousands of spectators, raises an interesting question about the nature of both youth elite sports, as well as about the features, moral values and undercover cultures of women's artistic gymnastics. We tried to find some answers and explanations to these questions with an empirical inquiry based on real experiences and perspectives of elite gymnastics coaches about conceptual and normative issues of elite achievements in women's artistic gymnastics.

The coaches were asked to explain the main factors of support and obstacles marking the path of creating the top results in their sport. The insight into their inner world, perspectives and reflections about the studied phenomenon was reached with the qualitative phenomenological approach. Martínková⁶⁴ defined that the phenomenological approach is dealing with the authentic understanding of the individual, which is particularly applicable for the sports ethics research. Namely, Martínková justified that life reality reflection from the personal perspective, with emphasis on human experiences and their relations with concrete life situation are in the front of the phenomenological study. Therefore, this approach is especially suitable to study everyday life issues; such as, for example, self-understanding of the meaning of life, transience and mortality, freedom and responsibility.

The four elite gymnastics' coaches participated in the semi-structured in-depth interviews. In the time of data collection, all of them were active coaching the elite athletes of Slovenian cadet, junior or senior national women's artistic gymnastics team. The purposive selection of interviewed coaches was

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Silvia Camporesi, "Bioethics and Sport", in: M. McNamee, W. J. Morgan (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*, pp. 81–97.

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Petra Korać, "Genet(h)ics and Sport", in: M. M. Škerbić (ed.), *1st International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, Croatian Philosophical Society, Zagreb – Varaždin 2018, p. 33.

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S. Camporesi, "Bioethics and Sport", pp. 81–97.

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Matija Mato Škerbić, "Bioethics of Sport and Its Place in the Philosophy of Sport", in: M. M. Škerbić (ed.), *1st International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, p. 40.

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B. Jošt, J. Vodičar, *Športni učitelj in trener*.

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Ibid., p. 49.

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J. W. Lassiter, C. A. Watt, "Student Coaches' Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Behaviors Regarding the Female Athlete Triad", pp. 142–151.

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Zdenko Medveš, "Pedagoška etika in koncept vzgoje. 1. del", *Sodobna pedagogika* 40 (1991) 4, pp. 101–117.

63

Anton Trstenjak, "Profesionalna etika in civilna družba", in: L. Toplak (ed.), *Profesionalna etika pri delu z ljudmi*, pp. 9–12.

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Irena Martínková, "Phenomenology and Sport", in: M. McNamee, W. J. Morgan (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*, pp. 178–191.

reached with the snowball sampling method and led us to the best national coaches. Three of them were male and Slovenian nationality, and one coach was female and few years ago came to Slovenia from Ukraine as a full-time employee of the Slovenian Gymnastics Federation. The average age of the coaches was 50 years, and they were already coaching 28 years approximately. The questions for the interview with coaches were developed on the bases of a previous pilot study, which details are published elsewhere.⁶⁵ The interviews were conducted personally by the author of this article and data collection procedures was implemented in the gymnastics clubs, where the coaches worked. All interviews were recorded with MB3 recorder and later transcribed by verbatim in detail. The transcripts were analysed by the qualitative content analysis with the systematic coding and joining the codes into common categories.⁶⁶ In the analysis of respondents' statements, we focused on the similarities and differences of their perspectives and experiences about creating the elite achievements in women's artistic gymnastics. The undercover meanings of statements we tried to understand "between the sentences" of manifested conversations.⁶⁷ All data collection procedure respected the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki⁶⁸ to ensure the welfare of the study participants. Ethical aspects of the research were discussed and approved by the Ethics Committee at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Before giving an interview, all respondents signed a consent agreement on voluntary participation in the study, with the right to withdraw at any study point without any consequences. All presented statements in this manuscript respect the respondents' right to confidentiality and anonymity.

Does really everything depend on the coach?

Interviews with coaches showed that elite achievements in artistic gymnastics are understood as a path with ups and downs, which are resulting in many different ways, based on the subjective view of individuals and their perspective, what is the true meaning of the elite achievement. For example, besides the visible achievements, medals and trophies, the elite achievements could also be outstanding improvements in abilities or performance. At that point, we need to emphasise that adults create elite achievement. In our view, the child can not be aware of the superiority of their performance. After all, the child is just a human being in a transition path to reach physical, emotional, social and intellectual maturity of adults. Therefore, the recognition of excellence and top-level achievement is based only on the presence of the third – the audience. The main question is how the audience defines an elite achievement. We can argue that elite achievements are subject of the judgment. What is an elite achievement, is a matter of values, views and opinions of society and humankind. For example, the best placement at the competition can also be achieved with some mistakes in performance. Everything depends on the rigour of the judges at a particular contest, place and time. However, the outstanding talent is indispensable for elite achievements and could be found only among rare individuals. The coaches' statements revealed their understanding of outstanding talents to be closely related to the child's personality. However, they emphasised that only 2% of children have these outstanding abilities and can create elite achievements.

"The real talent is very rare (...). I can say that I met the real talent only three times in my life. The real talent in which it is possible to recognise (...) one of those special abilities. This is the

same, as someone will talk to you about the fourth dimension. Neither I or you understand anything about it. The talented people have a special insight into things. Something that is usually a result of hard work by us, the talents deal with in a sort of intuitional way (...). Moreover, it is important that we recognise this superior ability at the right time, and offer a suitable environment for talent development, giving them the right conditions (...).” (MK-U-3/1)

The entire process of creating the elite achievements it would never be possible without child’s personality features and character traits. Intrinsic motivation, the joy of sport, concentration, perseverance, independence in work, and emotional stability represent fundamental personality traits of the athlete with a highly promising talent by the perspective of the elite gymnastics’ coaches. And all these attributes represent the morality of the sport as also emphasised by Hosta. For the ethos of sport, the emotional attachment is unavoidable. Hosta justified the phenomenon of the ethos of sport as being one of the basic morality concepts in sport, occurring in an atmosphere created by the relations of specific parties involved in sport, such as athletes, coaches, referees, spectators, fans etc.⁶⁹ We can argue that the desired personal attributes of elite gymnasts essentially contribute to their success. However, they are not only a result of genetics but also of the relations among all actors come to the fore along the way of creating elite achievements in gymnastics.

Beside that psychological characteristics, the elite female gymnasts need to have a proper body constitution, which is based on the pre-adolescent body shape with narrow hips and long upper and lower extremities. Sports philosopher Parry is talking about the concept of “Standard Body” that is prescribed or assumed in every sport or even in individual disciplines within a particular sport and discriminates the participants from others.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in artistic gymnastics essential are motor skills of coordination and flexibility as showing through the feeling for movement and performing acrobatics. However, the interviewed coaches strongly emphasised that the child’s ability for hard-working, which consists of persistent and intensive work in every day, the strong will and motivation to work, discipline, and perseverance in activity despite difficulties and obstacles, are essential for the development of physical, motor, and psychological potentials of the talented athlete.

“Of course, the child needs to be talented, but the discipline and working habits are even more important. It is possible that elite athlete has an average predisposition or not so outstanding.

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Joca Zurc, “The Price Behind the Beauty of the Olympic Performance in Women’s Artistic Gymnastics during the Period 1972–1988”, in: Celia H. Brackenridge, Daniel Rhind (eds.), *Elite Child Athlete Welfare. International Perspectives*, Brunel University, London 2010, pp. 118–126; Joca Zurc, “Ustvarjanje vrhunškega dosežka – med samouresničevanjem in zlorabo”, *Borec* 63 (2011) 676–680, pp. 216–239.

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Cf. Frane Adam *et al.*, *Kvalitativno raziskovanje v interdisciplinarni perspektivi*, Inštitut za razvojne in strateške analize, Ljubljana 2012.

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Cf. Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, Sage Publications Ltd., London 2006.

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World Medical Association (WMA), “Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects”, *World Medical Association* (9 July 2018). Available at: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/> (accessed on 19 December 2018).

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M. Hosta, “Ethics and Sport”, p. 91.

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Jim Parry, “The Standard Body”, in: M. M. Škerbić (ed.), *1st International Conference Ethics, Bioethics and Sport*, p. 38.

Talent is a unique phenomenon that trumps everything. However, the talented individual is who is willing to do more demanding tasks. Therefore, the willingness to work and the abilities to do an enormous amount of work are the most important. Such examples are gymnasts Turisceva and Korbut. Korbut was fantastic, very talented in all gymnastics' disciplines, but Turisceva was working very hard and had great discipline. It is difficult to say that Turisceva was talented due to her motor deficit, inflexibility, and she had heavy bones. Despite all that, she built herself in a champion based on her strong wishes, attitudes, and her effort. She invested enormous effort, and therefore she became the all-around Olympic champion, while Korbut never won the all-around gymnastics competition." (G-U-4/1)

The hard work to create elite achievements in gymnastics demands the child's independence. Despite support and numerous external factors without control, the way to the top needs to be walked by the child. In the elite sport there are no shortcuts.

"Along this path, you need to walk alone. There is nothing such as copy-paste. Every moment, every success is very well deserved (...), earned honestly, nothing is donated. Because nothing is given, the working habits are important. (...) The child abilities are not an issue. The issue is, if the child is not it is not being able to concentrate and fully complete a task." (MK-U-5/5–6)

The factor of *starting age* was the next influential reason for the success in artistic gymnastics highlighted by the coaches. The interviewees stated that the best female athletes should begin with gymnastics already in kindergarten, at about four or five years of age. In their opinion, the children who have succeeded in gymnastics despite delayed enrolment are very rare, usually extremely talented. However, at the same time the coaches acknowledged that all children, and especially the most talented ones, must start at the earliest age with the playing training, without compromising on competitions and striving for perfection in movement performance. A child is unaware of the dimensions of her achievements and therefore it's not able to judge or recognise which achievements are more worthy than others.

"At the beginning, the child is not aware of what is awaiting them in the future. For a child, everything is just a game. For example, I had the youngest girl, who won the competition at the age of 7. She was not aware of what it is all about. She only knew that I was happy with her performance, and that was all. She was interested only to go for a pizza as soon as possible after the competition." (MK-U-5/1)

In line with our findings, Tofler *et al.* quote that elite women's artistic gymnastics around the world begins with the training of young girls between the age of five and seven. At the age of ten, most of the best gymnasts have already been included in the professional training of the elite sport.⁷¹ Consequently, this phenomenon turned women's artistic gymnastics into some sport for little girls or children's sport. However, this was not the case at the earliest stages of gymnastics competitions at the Olympic Games of the Modern Age. Before the year of 1972, the gymnastics competitions consisted of female competitors as grown adults. For example, some of the Olympic medalists were 30 years of age and over. The average age dropped in 25 years from 25 to 17 years of age.⁷² This process of dropping the age was, besides many different factors, also encouraged with the development of apparatus and equipment for gymnastics which required new movement skills and body abilities to perform those movements. The first pre-adolescence competitors attended the World Championship in Dortmund in 1966, as reported by Caine *et al.*⁷³ Ten years later, at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, 14-year-olds Nadia Comăneci and Nellie Kim stepped into the foreground. They performed incredible gymnastics exercises with an unbelievable scope of skills and knowledge at such a young age for that time. In the 1980s, the age of

competitors and winners of the biggest international women's artistic gymnastics competitions still dangerously decreased. For example, Romanian gymnast Daniela Silivaş who was awarded for her excellent performance at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul with incredible seven perfect tens, was just three years before that at the 1958 World Championship in Montreal gold medallist at the balance beam and the second with a team when she was only 13 years of age. For such reasons, elite gymnasts represent the group of the youngest participants at the Olympic Games in the last 40 years. The Olympic medallist was about 16 years old. We argue that these outcomes were nothing more than direct consequences of the entrance to the professional sport in very early years, followed by an intense engagement at the competitions and recruitment of pre-adolescent girls to the national team, and achieving the top of sports career during the adolescence. In the collected data, we found a very interesting fact that most gymnasts immediately retired when they achieved top results in their sports career. At that point, we could have exposed an ethical question or dilemma, why the elite gymnasts retired immediately after a great success. It would be more natural to retire if there were some problems, such as injuries or failures in the competitions. We can predict that success would give them additional motivation and strength to put their goals even higher or at least defend the title at the next competition. But in gymnastics, it seems that the system does not work that way. Therefore, the question arises, who or what is behind the decision of athlete retirement. We might assume that this could be injuries which are probably more devastating for the body as visible on the winning athlete, and/or could be a system that manipulates and makes a decision about the athlete career and life path. Now, where is the elite sport respecting athlete's rights, children's rights and human rights?

Furthermore, *the role of parents* was reflected through team collaboration among the trio of coach – athlete – parent as expressed in the interviews with coaches. The presence of parents in the training process is very important, especially when issues arise. In these cases, the consultation with the family, together with family support is of essential importance for the sports career of the athlete. Further, the elite achievements are also influenced by the social circumstances of the child's family based on the coaches views. Their statements revealed the cases when the athletes' financial support⁷⁴ with regular income serve as social surviving and improvement of the budget for all family. The income of young pre-adolescent gymnasts was very often even higher than the income of their parents.

"Great differences are among children. However, in my opinion, the work in the team among athlete, coach and parent has a significant influence. Nevertheless, for a high-quality work, the child also needs to have strong support from their family." (MK-U-5/1)

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I. R. Tofler *et al.*, "Physical and Emotional Problems of Elite Female Gymnasts", pp. 281–283.

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The average age of 25 years was calculated for the winners of competitions in year of 1965, and average age of 17 years was calculated for the best gymnasts in year of 1997. See: M. Léglise, *The Protection of Young People Involved in High-level Sport*.

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D. J. Caine, K. Russell, L. Lim, *Handbook of Sports Medicine and Science. Gymnastics*, pp. 17–27.

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In the countries of the Eastern Bloc, which many decades dominated in female and male gymnastics, the financing of the athletes comes from the state or government. In the recent two decades, more and more funding prizes, grants and earnings come from the private sector.

Conclusion

This paper was built on emerging and necessary discussions in the field of philosophy of sport regarding the ethical aspects of top-level youth sport to ensure the health and wellbeing of young athletes. As presented in the introduction section with the case of Elena Mukhina, a world champion in 1978, the main ethical principle of the top-level sport is the ethics of maximum. Irrespectively of the historical moment of the Modern Olympics, we can always recognise certain normative issues present in the top-level gymnastics, such as the intensive training from an early age, competing and winning at the biggest international contests during a period of childhood and the early end of a sport career. With acceptance and rationalisation of pain and injuries, they inhibit the progress of the two ethics of future – the ethics of minimum and the ethics of hope. In this paper we argued that the main risk factors that generate the conceptual and normative issues of ethics of youth sports are coach–athlete relationship, knowledge and moral values of the coach, issues of age that preserve the culture of “child’s sport”, the role of parents, demands of society, and public access to genetic testing. All these risks lead to a higher exposure of children to exploitations and potential physical, psychological or sexual abuses.

The voice of the coaches who participated in our study revealed their everyday life experiences with women’s artistic gymnastics at the top-level. They understand the notion of elite achievement as a very sensible concept, changing with the time and resulting in a subjective view of individual and society represented by judges, code of points, and audience. The question is what the true meaning is or how we can recognise the best performance. The mystery of the achievement of first perfect 10 at the Modern Olympic Games, which was reached by Nadia Elena Comănesci in Montreal 1976, is still very much alive, although ten years ago the International Gymnastics Federation in the competition’s code of points already removed the final score of perfect 10 and opened the space for unlimited grading. However, after more than 40 years, the ethics of maximum is still the main driven force behind the elite women’s gymnastics. Character traits of gymnasts such as intrinsic motivation, the joy of sport, concentration, perseverance, independence, and emotional stability, along with the ability to work hard, discipline and perseverance in the performance despite difficulties and obstacles, are essential for the development of a talented athlete. In addition to that, the starting age with sport in the connotation of “the younger, the better” and the role of parents and their approval or even potentiation of the system play a significant role in this process according to the opinions of the interviewees. In conclusion, the final question arises – who is behind driving the exposure of young children to risks and sacrifices to succeed in the elite sport? We argue that there is no single answer, multiple impacts and actors are in effect. However, we could not avoid the special consideration of the morality of the coach, as one from the main factors that are defined and determined by the ethics of the society.

The obtained findings of our study provide important insight for new strategies towards the development and safeguarding of talented children and youth in sport. In the future, the main focus should be placed on pedagogical and didactical approaches of coaches, which require a significant improvement in the sense to respect young athletes’ needs, will, feelings and opinions. At the same time, it is important to develop strategies for disclosure of obstacles,

which could occur side by side with top achievements. Findings of our study provide a transferable insight into a contemporary reality of young athletes' life among different sports and should be taken into consideration in particular by the implementation of the Youth Olympic Games.

Joca Zurc

Etički aspekti zdravlja i dobrobiti mladih elitnih atletičara

Koncepcijski i normativni problemi

Sažetak

Sport i fizička aktivnost nude osjetljivo okruženje u kojemu se ističu vrijednosti čovječnosti, ljudskih prava, empatije i ferpleja. Međutim, istovremeno natjecateljska priroda sporta i interes za pobjeđivanje pod svaku cijenu predstavlja rizik škodljivosti, posebno za mlade predadolescentske sportaše. Stoga se javlja potreba za utvrđivanjem glavnih etičkih koncepcijskih i normativnih problema u vrhunskom sportu mladih. Naš kritički pregled mogućih faktora rizika i empirijskih pronalazaka u djelomično strukturiranim dubinskim intervjuima s četiri vrhunska trenera gimnastike pokazala su da su uspjesi djece u sportu rezultat višestrukih faktora poticanih glavnom silom etike maksimuma. Intrinzična motivacija gimnastičara, zadovoljstvo bavljenjem sportom, ustrajni predan rad, rani početak i uloga roditelja ključni su za uspjeh. Međutim, moralnost trenera kao odražavatelja društvenih vrijednosti trebalo bi ubuduće pomno razmotriti.

Ključne riječi

etika sporta, razvoj talenta, iskorištavanje djece, sportska gimnastika, Olimpijske igre mladih, etika društva, kvalitativno istraživanje

Joca Zurc

Ethische Aspekte der Gesundheit und des Wohlbefindens junger Elitesportler

Konzeptionelle und normative Fragen

Zusammenfassung

Ein Kind gemäß den hohen ethischen Grundsätzen aufzuziehen ist das Ziel jeglicher Erziehung und Erwartung eines jeden Elternteils. Sport und körperliche Aktivitäten bieten ein sensibles Umfeld, in dem die Werte der Menschlichkeit, Menschenrechte, Empathie und des Fair Play in den Vordergrund rücken. Gleichzeitig stellen aber die Wettbewerbsnatur des Sports und das Interesse, um jeden Preis zu gewinnen, ein Schadensrisiko dar, namentlich für junge voradoleszente Sportler. Daher besteht die Notwendigkeit, die wichtigsten ethischen konzeptionellen und normativen Probleme des Spitzensports bei Jugendlichen zu identifizieren. Unsere kritische Überprüfung möglicher Risikofaktoren und der empirischen Befunde der halbstrukturierten Tiefeninterviews mit vier Spitzenturnen-Trainern zeigte, dass die Leistungen von Kindern im Sport das Ergebnis mehrerer Faktoren sind, die von der dahinter liegenden Hauptkraft der Ethik des Maximums getrieben werden. Die intrinsische Motivation der Turner, die Freude am Sport, die anhaltende harte Arbeit, der Start im frühen Alter und die Rolle der Eltern sind ausschlaggebend für den Erfolg. Die Moralität des Trainers als Spiegelbild gesellschaftlicher Werte sollte jedoch in Zukunft sorgfältig abgewogen werden.

Schlüsselwörter

Sportethik, Talentförderung, Ausbeutung von Kindern, Kunstturnen, Olympische Jugendspiele, Ethik der Gesellschaft, qualitative Studie

Joca Zurc

Les aspects éthiques de la santé et du bien-être chez les jeunes athlètes d'élite

Problèmes conceptuels et normatifs

Résumé

Élever un enfant en accord avec des normes éthiques rigoureuses est l'objectif de toute éducation et de chaque parent. Le sport et les activités physiques offrent un environnement sensible où les valeurs humaines, les droits humains, l'empathie et le fair-play sont mis au premier plan. Cependant, la nature compétitive du sport et l'intérêt pour une victoire à n'importe quel prix présentent un risque de préjudice, spécialement pour les jeunes athlètes préadolescents. Ainsi émerge le besoin d'identifier les conceptions éthiques majeures et les problèmes normatifs dans le sport de haut niveau chez les jeunes. Notre examen critique des possibles facteurs à risques et les résultats empiriques des entretiens semi-structurés et approfondis réalisés auprès de quatre entraîneurs de gymnastes de haut niveau ont montré que la réussite des enfants dans le sport est le résultat de multiples facteurs qui découlent de la principale force de l'éthique à conduire le sportif à son maximum. La motivation intrinsèque des gymnastes, la plaisir du sport, le travail assidu, les débuts à un âge précoce et le rôle des parents sont essentiels pour le succès. Cependant, la morale de l'entraîneur comme reflet des valeurs de la société devrait à l'avenir être considérée avec soin.

Mots-clés

éthique du sport, développement du talent, exploitation des enfants, gymnastique artistique, Jeux olympiques de la jeunesse, éthique de la société, étude qualitative