

The Moral Pathologies of National Sporting Representation at the Olympics

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Abstract

Nationality, citizenship and eligibility have become increasingly relevant in sport, especially under current conditions where there is an increasing number of players who change their 'allegiances' for international sporting purposes. Whilst it is reasonable to link such trends to wider processes of globalisation and accelerated migratory flows, it is also evident that national sporting representation is subject to the venal power of commercialism. The concern is that national representation has developed into a more strategic, planned, and economically driven activity that involves the overt collusion of National Governing Bodies and individual athletes. This paper evaluates the moral status of current international sporting representation (ISR) rules and practices as they relate to the Olympics. By drawing on de Coubertin's notion of 'sincere internationalism' and Walsh and Guilianotti's (2007) work on hyper-commercialisation in sport, we will attempt to demonstrate how some of the current practices and regulations of ISR are ethically problematic. We conclude that current ISR regulations are drawn too loosely and need to be amended in order to limit the moral pathologies identified. Our critique is informed by empirical data collected from members of the Welsh sports practice community.

KEYWORDS Olympics; national identity; commercialisation; eligibility; ethics

Introduction

When theorising on the relationship between sport and national identity, Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities' is particularly insightful. According to Anderson (1983) nations are imagined since members of these communities never get to know, meet, or even hear most of their fellow members. Many authors (Smith and Porter 2004; Holmes and Storey 2011) argue that international sports are a significant objective and symbolic instance where the 'imagined community' comes alive. Such competition acts as a highly visible embodiment of nations, which gives the otherwise inchoate national communities a sense of legitimacy and clarity. The fact that sport thrives when acting as a conduit for such socio-psychological feelings only strengthens the relationship between sport and nationalism.

Recent trends in ISR however, have led sociologists of sport to question the nature of the sports-nationalism relation in contemporary society. This work has focused on an increasingly flexible relationship between national allegiance and ISR. It is becoming increasingly commonplace for sportspeople to represent nations other than the one in which they were born and brought up, and in some instances, to switch nationality purely for sporting purposes. For some these trends mirror the increasing elasticity and decreasing importance of national identities more generally (Poli 2007). On a more cynical and problematic note, however, others (Maguire 1996; Walsh and Guilianotti 2007; Holmes and Storey 2011) have suggested that the driving force initiating such flexibility is often the commercial and instrumental orientation of contemporary sport. On this reading, athletes' decisions to change nationality are often based on a pragmatic and instrumental desire to reap the extrinsic benefits of ISR rather than anything to do with cultural or national allegiance. These problems and tensions of ISR have not gone unnoticed, and several International Governing Bodies, usually in response to some scandal have proposed numerous changes to their ISR regulations. On the one hand such regulations seem to advocate that progress and greater freedom in sport require greater portability, detachment and independence from overtly rigid ties of kinship, geography and national identity. On the other hand however, governing bodies seem aware that international sport is essentially a practice grounded in communal and collective social relations, and that weak regulations might diminish the value and credibility of such competition.

Whilst this issue has been discussed in several contexts within the sociology of sport (Maguire 1996; Chiba et al 2001; Grainger 2006; Poli 2007; Holmes and Storey 2011) these discussions have tended to be descriptive in nature. Our aim within this paper is to build on the aforementioned work by developing a moral perspective on issues of ISR. More specifically, we will argue that some of the current regulations and practices of ISR are morally problematic. We believe that the normative considerations presented in this paper complement the existing sociological and descriptive work to provide a more rounded and critical appraisal of ISR. This paper is divided into two parts. First, we draw on de Coubertin's articulation of 'sincere internationalism' and Morgan's account of 'reflective nationalism' in an attempt to outline certain moral values that might emerge through the sports-nationalism relation. In the second part, we adapt Walsh and Guilianotti's (2007) work on hyper-commercialisation to demonstrate how the rules and practices of ISR are often morally pathological and undermine some of the

virtues that might emerge through sporting competition. We conclude by sketching how the principles developed might inform policy development and revision.

The Value of the Sports-Nationalism Relation

It has been argued that, in contemporary times, no phenomenon is as adept as international sporting competition at manifesting the ills of national identification (Reynolds 1990). George Orwell's (1945) assertion that sport was 'war minus the shooting' has become a pithy strap-line for anti-nationalistic sentiments. According to Hargreaves (1992) such sentiments manifest themselves in the dogmatic view that universal sporting movements like Olympism are at odds with the perceived insular and self-regarding features of nationalism. On the face of it, there seems to be an obvious tension between the particularistic and parochial excesses of nationalism on the one hand and the internationalist and universalistic ideals associated with Olympism on the other. This purported tension is rooted in a particular reading of nationalism as problematic, divisive and confrontational. Orwell's observation suggests that sport is second only to military conflict in providing a stage for nationalism's worst, and for some, its only face.

Although it must be accepted that sport, has, on occasions provided an arena for vulgar manifestations of nationalism, it does not necessarily mean that international sporting competition is inherently problematic. Indeed, both Morgan (1995; 1997; 1998; 2000) and Walsh and Gulianotti (2007) argue that such cultural and national representation is one of the fundamental moral values that can emerge from and through sport. This reading of the sports-nationalism relation amounts to a liberal and moderate understanding of national ties. Its adherents deplore the vulgar ethnocentrism and jingoism that too often stem from (and acts in the name of) nationalism, but nonetheless reject the idea that nationalism and patriotism are inherently unethical (Morgan 1998; Dixon 2000; Walsh and Guilianotti 2007). They argue from a communitarian perspective that particular and communal attachments are a fundamental part of human existence, and that what is required is that these attachments be rendered in more peaceful, liberal, and cosmopolitan ways. Accordingly, we should reject the idea that cultural differences are incommensurable, for it is these disparate ways of life which serve as the required catalyst for interesting and insightful conversation on the road to human improvement

(Morgan 1998). What is required is greater and more powerful ways of conversing with various cultures so as to develop a more peaceful, harmonious and flourishing world.

Morgan (1995; 1997; 1998; 2000) has been a consistent defender of the notion that global sporting events are well suited towards such an endeavour. This understanding of the sport-nationalism relationship was foretold by de Coubertin himself. De Coubertin disliked, and saw as misguided, the idea of a universal cosmopolitanism, which urges individuals to put aside their particular attachments in favour of a detached, abstract and utopian vantage point (Morgan 1995). Rather he wished to advocate a 'sincere internationalism' in which a healthy and moderate pride in one's own cultural and national tradition coexists with a wider appreciation and respect for other cultures. De Coubertin's views seem consistent with liberal nationalism's claim that a moderate love of one's own country is conducive towards learning a love of humanity more generally. The notion of 'sincere internationalism' not only demonstrates the possibility of placing patriotic pride within the boundaries of Olympism, but also attempts to show how sport, and indeed society in general, benefits from seeing the relationship in this way. In this sense, de Coubertin argued international sport is a fruitful arena ideally suited to articulating and displaying the virtues of a liberal and sincere internationalism (Morgan 1995). As Holt (1989, 274) argues;

Coubertin did not wish to promote nationalism characterised by hostility and chauvinism to other countries. On the contrary, he sought to foster 'patriotism', which he felt combined the love of one's country with an acceptance and appreciation of the love that other people felt for theirs. Sport was to be the means of recognizing different peoples within the wider framework of a common humanity deriving from Greek culture – 'the Esperanto of the Races' as Jean Giradoux was later to put it. The Olympic Games aimed to foster a religion of patriotism, directing the new power of national identity into constructive and peaceful channels.

What Morgan (1998), Dixon (2000) and de Coubertin therefore share is the belief that global sporting events such as the Olympics can be powerful and healthy sources of pride in one's own nation without sliding into chauvinism and vulgar nationalism. The significance of international sport to liberal nationalism lies with its potential to express effectively 'the

national' and 'the international' simultaneously. As Morgan (1997) argues, the potential of a liberal nationalism depends crucially on being displayed in some tangible way. As stated earlier, if nations are imagined communities, they need some visible outlet in order to come alive. In the same way, a sincere internationalism is only truly visible and operative when expounded by a community of national cultures in an explicit way. Morgan (1998) argues that sport is one language through which one's patriotic commitment to one's nation can be most clearly and effectively expressed. More importantly perhaps, is that international sport also provides insight into the values and traditions of other cultural communities. Such knowledge of other nations and cultures provides the fertile ground from which virtues like respect, tolerance and admiration might be comprehensively realised in ways that otherwise would be closed-off. Sporting events such as the Olympics thus have a narrative potential that brings various cultural communities to life, and in so doing provides an (at least ephemeral) link for genuine cross-cultural dialogue

There are many examples of this narrative capacity of international competition whereby sport has become both the symbol and the location for ideological and political struggles. For example, Morgan (1998) examines the case of Algerian athlete Hassiba Boulmerka. Boulmerka's decision not to abide by Muslim modesty rules when competing, (which requires women to conceal their bodies) aroused the ire of a vocal group from the Muslim community. In this case, the multinational athletic community served as the context for meaningful cultural dialogue about cultural and religious differences. As it happened the case, according to Morgan (1998, 188), proved to be an opportune context to 'speak out, to convey (especially to young Algerians not yet enamoured with or daunted by fascist fundamentalism and to Westerners ... not yet enamoured with the stereotypical views of Muslims that greet them at every turn), that Islamic culture is not the hotbed of fanaticism ... (and) not necessarily hostile either to individual effort or the plight of women'. Under such conditions the Olympics is a stage on which different conceptions of the good are played out in a highly visible, yet democratic manner. It is for this reason that Morgan (1998) argues that international sporting competition has the capacity to give life to a liberal and constructive internationalism and thus points to what liberal nationalism aspires as a moral ideal. Morgan (1998, 2) summarises the moral value of international sporting movements in the following way:

I want to defend sportive expressions of nationalism, or at least certain forms of them, against this wholesale criticism by arguing that they miss the mark because they fail to see that a compelling, even if frequently debased and trivialised, moral ideal underpins such expressions. That ideal, I argue further, is a complex one that combines two related moral notions often thought to be in tension with one another: on the one hand, the notion that each nation has its own distinctive and original way of being that it must discover and, once discovered, be true to; and, on the other hand, that finding and working out that identity is largely a dialogical matter, one whose realization depends upon maintaining and sustaining open-ended and ongoing conversations with other peoples. That these two notions often find themselves at loggerheads testifies to the fragility of the ideal, that they are capable, nonetheless, of harmonious expression testifies to its moral potency.

In supporting the claim that international sporting competitions are an important outlet for the virtues of a moderate and liberal nationalism, we have also indirectly supported McFee's (2004) claim that sport functions as a moral laboratory¹. A crucial aspect of McFee's idea of a moral laboratory, however, is that sport's potential in this respect is by no means guaranteed. Indeed, the moral laboratory is so named because it could just as well turn out that sport teaches immorality. We must therefore be attentive to whether the values and messages transmitted through sport are indeed justifiable values. This is particularly relevant to the issue at hand, for recent trends in ISR seem to undermine the moral virtues of such competition as articulated by de Coubertin.

Sport as a Rogue Moral Laboratory?

Poli (2007) argues that the increasing pressures of globalisation and the acceleration of migratory flows has instigated a process of denationalisation where traditional national identities are being replaced by a more global and fluid sense of belonging. According to Poli (2007), ISR is a prime example of the decreasing significance and increasing irregularity of national identities. Examples of the increasing flexibility of national sporting representatives are legion. Maguire (1996) for example, referred to the way in which the Great British Ice Hockey team, during the World Championship (1993), consisted of 15 Canadian dual-nationals in a squad of 23. Similarly Holmes and Storey (2004) documented the 'Anglo' dominance within the

Republic of Ireland team during the 1990s, demonstrated by the fact that on six occasions a team started with nine players neither born nor brought up in Ireland. This issue is also illustrated clearly by the number Kenyan, Ethiopian and Bulgarian athletes representing Qatar and Bahrain in recent Olympic Games (Poli, 2007; Hayward, 2011). Following Poli (2007), it may be argued that sports is playing a central role in articulating and displaying a more fluid, plural and unencumbered global sense of identity. Whilst we agree with many of Poli's (2007) arguments, this explanation seems to downplay the issue of motivations set against a background of rampant commercialisation in sport. Our concern, therefore, is not that the world is changing and that people in general (and athletes in particular) are more flexible in terms of national and cultural identities, but rather with the motivations underlying player movement and flexibility. On our reading of ISR, national and cultural sporting identities remain fairly robust, however, they are threatened; not just by the cosmopolitan proclivities of individuals, but rather by the commercial interests that dominate contemporary sport.

Although it is clear that capitalist institutions and particular individuals have benefited enormously from sport, it is also evident that sport has, in some respects, also benefited from the intensification of its commercialisation. Nonetheless, there is growing concern that the obsession with sport's extrinsic values endangers some of its definitive intrinsic values (Morgan 2006; Walsh and Guilianotti 2007). Although hyper-commercialisation is by no means the only area of moral concern in sport, some (Morgan 2006; Walsh and Gulianotti 2007) argue that it is at present the greatest peril that threatens its moral standing. The worry is that the pervasive nature of capitalism sometimes has the capacity to usurp all other values that emerge through sport. A consequence of this hyper-commercialisation which has received less attention than the presence of performance enhancing drugs, cheating and corruption is its effects on ISR.

There is evidence that ISR has developed into a more corrupt, strategic and economically driven activity. Maguire (1996: 351) for instance, argues that many athletes are treated and act as hired mercenaries whereby representing a nation does not call into question their sense of identity or cultural familiarity, rather it involves playing for a 'flag of convenience'. Similarly, Holmes and Storey (2011) explore the senses of national identity felt by Irish national representatives who were not born or brought up in the country. Whilst their findings suggest significant attitudinal difference between various individuals, they also clearly demonstrate that some athletes are what they dub 'careerists'.

A more concrete example includes the nationality change of the former Ethiopian runner Zenebech Tola, who unsuccessfully sought citizenship in Switzerland, America, Canada and France before Bahrain offered her fast-track citizenship and according to Poli (2007) a payment of 80,000 euros. Tola was required to change her name to Mariam Yusuf Jamal and now competes for Bahrain, although she still lives in Switzerland (Poli, 2007). Similarly, Saif Saaeed Shaheen, formerly known as Kenyan Stephen Cherono, was granted a Qatari citizenship six weeks before winning the 2003 World Championship 3000m steeplechase title for Qatar. Shaheen admitted he made this choice for financial reasons having being promised a life pension of 1,000 dollars per month (Poli, 2007). What makes this example even more instructive is Mulhauser's (2004) claim that the Kenyan Athletic Association agreed for Cherono to represent Qatar² after they were promised a new track facility in return.

These are by no means isolated incidents and its extreme manifestation is exemplified by the eleven track and field athletes taken to the 2008 Olympic Games by Bahrain, ten of whom were former Kenyan or Moroccan athletes. The notion of 'hired mercenaries' is also well documented in the sport of Weightlifting, where some nations are buying talented Bulgarian athletes to increase their medal winning prospects (Hayward, 2000). Qatar again is one of the most prominent examples as their Weightlifting team for the 2000 Sydney Olympics was almost entirely represented by former Bulgarian national representatives (Hayward, 2000). Most of these athletes still live and train in Bulgaria, and Hayward (2000) ironically captures the paradox of such national representation when claiming that the stomach upsets that kept Badr Nayef (formerly known as Peter Tanev) and Nader Abbas (formerly known as Andrey Georgier Ivanov) out of the Olympics weightlifting finals were due to their unfamiliarity with middle eastern cuisine.

As these examples prove, nation 'switching' is driven as much by national federations or their representatives who encourage talented athletes to explore the possibilities of representing a nation other than one of intuitive fate (Chiba et al 2001, Poli 2007, Tarasti 2007). It is therefore important to note that the problems of ISR are both individual (athletes) and collective (the complicity of National Governing Bodies). For example, Poli (2007) describes the way in which France holds a special committee prior to major sporting events and submits to the international Olympic executive committee a list of sportspersons it wishes to naturalise.³ Similarly, Slovenia has created a special law allowing accelerated naturalisations of celebrities or sportsmen who

may further the nation's image and success (Poli, 2007). Chiba et al (2001) have reported similar processes in Japan whilst Tarasti (2007) has documented the growing number of countries that actively recruit elite level athletes to improve the medal winning prospects of their Olympic team.

Whilst authors such as Maguire (1996) and Holmes and Storey (2011) have made the important connection between national representation and commercialisation, the research generated so far has lacked a clear critical dimension⁴. The focus for the remainder of this paper is to provide some normative considerations on issues of ISR. We aim to demonstrate that an important moral value that might emerge through sport - that of genuine national representation and sincere internationalism - is stripped of its normative and virtuous potential by policies and regulations that allow athletes and National Governing Bodies to sacrifice the more meaningful forms of identity on the altar of personal gain and profit. We set out, therefore, to build on the work of Morgan (2006) and Walsh and Guilianotti (2007) and identify certain moral pathologies in relation to international sporting representation that need to be addressed if such competition is to fulfil its potential as a constructive moral laboratory. Prior to this we make some methodological remarks to inform the subsequent discussion.

An Empirically Informed Philosophical Account

Developing a moral position in respect to issues of ISR could be a theoretical or hypothetical task. Our preference here is, however, to draw on empirical evidence from key figures from the Welsh sporting practice community⁵. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to question the experiences and opinions of various sporting representatives and figures from the practice community regarding issues of ISR. The aim, in capturing the values, interpretations, and experiences of the practice community, is to facilitate and provide context for the philosophical discussion. This study is consistent with other empirical studies on sport and national identity (Tuck and Magee 1998; Maguire and Sugden 2002), where the sample comprised key sporting figures from the practice community who had the necessary understanding and experiences required to provide the best and most appropriate illustrations. The sample aims capture a range of views from various stakeholders in the practice community. More specifically, the sample includes past sporting representatives (especially those to whom issues of ISR might be particularly salient), national coaches, sport lawyers, managers, media

and administrative figures. Although the following discussion will include some direct extracts from the interviews, it is important to note that the empirical data have also influenced our stance on issues of ISR more generally.

ISR and the Instrumental and Motivational Pathology

Walsh and Guilianotti (2007) have argued that commercialisation is pathological when it results in individuals treating themselves, others, or sport itself as mere means and not as ends-in-themselves. The aforementioned examples of the Great British Ice Hockey team (Maguire 1996), Republic of Ireland football team (Holmes and Storey 2004), and the case of Stephen Cheronon (Poli 2007) are examples of the instrumental and motivational pathology. In such cases the athlete's goals are to play at the highest level against the best opponents. Choosing to represent a particular country is the means by which their goal is achieved. Such athletes may adopt the trappings of their chosen nation (for example singing the national anthem), but such actions are subservient to the primary goal of fulfilling personal ambition. One of the respondents was fairly open about such motives. First, when asked what national identity he claimed, the former Welsh rugby international who was born in England replied:

British really ... I think it was almost for me ... not insulting but you couldn't really pretend to be Welsh, not with my accent, I don't think I can say I'm Welsh....I was actually very fortunate to be chosen for the Welsh and the English squad at the same time for the five nations. Now, I think there were several factors which helped me make my decision in terms of which way I leapt ... Yes, there was a part of me that was thinking 'well there's (naming several prominent English rugby players in his position) in the England squad' and 'what is my chance of playing for England' and when I looked at the Welsh squad, well actually, there is no doubt about it, my chance to play for Wales far outweighs my chances to play for England.

What is evident here is that the motivation for representing Wales is not primarily due to feelings of attachment to the country, but is rather based on playing at the highest level possible. In such instances ISR becomes primarily an instrumental means of acquiring other goods such as career enhancement, money, and status. Following Walsh and Guilianotti (2007),

we argue that if the motivation of athletes is primarily to use ISR as an instrumental means towards achieving other ends (such as money or career enhancement) then it should be considered as morally pathological, for it undermines an important moral value that can emerge through sport (that is, a form of genuine cultural expression).

Some participants, however, accepted the venal power of money as something inevitable in contemporary sports. This gives some credence to Morgan's (2006) claim that sport is in a poor moral state, and that the corruptive nature of over-commercialisation has consumed the sporting world. The following extract is typical of the tendencies towards accepting and normalising the motivational primacy of money in sports:

We must remember that, in some countries, the quality is so high it's almost impossible to get into the national side ... That is, there are probably loads of athletes in America who can run 100m in more or less ten seconds flat. But only three can get into the Olympic team ... so it's no surprise that these athletes look for other opportunities ... I think that they are quite straightforward about it aren't they? Athletes arrive and say 'I want to represent Bahrain for the money'. I don't think that anyone would arrive in Bahrain and say 'God I have always felt Gulf-Statish all my life even though I was born on the slopes of Kilimanjaro'.

Interviewer: But normatively speaking, do you not think that this is a problem?

No, no.

What is clear from this response is that the respondent is fully aware of the instrumental nature of national representation, but is not concerned that such practice poses any ethical issues. For example, a former Welsh rugby international claimed:

In Wales, and in fact any other country ... the most important thing in sport is winning, and everyone enjoys seeing their team winning, more than they enjoy seeing their team lose. In the end, if you give the option to a hundred Welsh people if they would like to see

Wales win the rugby World Cup with eight Welshmen and seven players from around the world, but who have some connection with Wales ... and that we then win the World Cup on that basis, would they care? I don't think so.

Although some of the participants accepted this instrumental nature of contemporary sport, the majority of respondents argued to the contrary, and believed such developments to be deeply pathological. The general consensus seemed to be that the instrumental nature of some national representatives was undermining some of the virtues and spirit of such competition. Most of the participants argued that international sports should be a contest between those genuinely connected to the country in question. There seemed to be a significant antipathy towards the ease with which some athletes dropped all feelings of attachment to their natural cultural communities in order to fulfil their desires of playing at the highest level. As argued insightfully by a football sports commentator:

If you turn national representation into something mercenary ... this idea that the soldier fights for whoever pays the most, that is unethical. Perhaps athletes do not kill people, but they do tout themselves to the highest bidder and betray the country that has coached them, the country that has given them the opportunities, and has often invested a lot in them... It was very obvious in this year's World Cup of course ... there were five players in the German first team that were not Germans. And if you ask me, I think that is crazy ... The problem is that it undermines the value of representing your country. And I think that the value of representing your own country is important ... It gives a purpose to live a good life, it gives a purpose for good practice and if you ... well turn it in to a commodity, to be something 'oh, to what country out of the four can I represent ... which has the best chance of winning?' ... It's not the winning that's important and it just spoils all the fundamental principles of good practice that are associated with sports at their best, and that I think is the danger.

This response is typical of the feelings and opinions of the majority of the sample. Although most of the participants were uneasy with some of the current trends of ISR, they were

nonetheless adamant that the market was crucially important to sport. For example, as one former Welsh rugby international argued:

The only issue that I have is this sort of 'for sale' sign around certain players, this commercialisation. But I just think that if there is money involved there's going to be that moral dilemma. But it's there, it's in the game and it's all important, it's far better to put up with one rogue mercenary than it is to do without the money that helps spread the game.

What is especially important in Walsh and Guilianotti's (2007) critique of market-driven sport, however, is the absence of an abolitionist approach – the view that there ought to be a separation between sport and the market. Their preferred option is to highlight and isolate distinct pathologies where over-commercialisation is unethical. In terms of the motivational and instrumental pathology, Walsh and Guilianotti (2007) accept that individuals may have mixed motives in terms of why they participate in sport. So, in the context of ISR, international athletes may be motivated to represent their nation for several reasons. For example, they may want to represent their nation in order to express their cultural and communal identity, but also because they aspire to play at the highest level possible, and also for the financial rewards that might accompany such representation. For this reason there is no need to adopt the radical conclusion that the mere presence of financial (or career-orientated) consideration is necessarily pathological in disrupting the value of genuine national and cultural representation. A more moderate critique would accept that athletes have mixed motives for participation, so that it would not necessarily be pathological if athletes have financial or other such motives. Such motives would only become pathological if they dominated one's motivational mindset. In this sense, such commercial considerations become pathological when they are the predominant motivation for representing a country in a sporting event. A corollary of this argument is that motivations for representing a country should predominantly be based on genuine feelings of cultural solidarity, love and pride. As one sports commentator and lawyer responded:

I think that's quite important because every country has its stars and what would happen to world sport if it was a kind of equivalent of the English Premiership where you could

buy players? It would collapse around our ears if that was the case. Because the whole point about international sport is that it's about national qualification and so on ... rather than about transfers...That is, you go back to this idea of Bosman ... Freedom to the worker ... and there are certain disadvantages with that because you have less local talent developed and so on ... but sometimes individual freedom is more important than that ... I accept that ... But I still don't see why this has to permeate into international sport ... This is where it has gone too far. If people try to argue that we are infringing an individual's freedom ... that is not true. Cristiano Ronaldo can come here to make his fortune as long as he goes back to play with other relatively average Portuguese players. There is nothing unfair about this ... Sorry, but there are some things you can't have in life. One of them is to represent a country which is not your own.

What we are arguing then, is that the capacity of international sport as a form of cultural expression is one important value that can emerge through sport. The problem is that current ISR regulations allow athletes and governing bodies to utilise national representation as a means to satisfy their own personal ends, or the nationalistic goals of political leaders and their sporting apparatchicks. Liberal and sincere internationalists ought to argue against the excessive liberalisation of regulations in terms of ISR that might distort the legitimate basis of patriotism. ISR regulations ought to ensure as far as possible that sporting representation hinge on representatives sharing authentic and enduring bonds with their fellow nationals. Walsh and Gulianotti (2007) call such values 'autotelic' for they are values that ought to be pursued as ends in themselves. As a former female Welsh international footballer insightfully argued:

I suppose it's something as simple as if you're a footballer and you play for one of the top Premiership clubs...you're effectively paid to play for that club and you will move around subject to availability and demand and your contract and your price and so on. International sport is not like that...Of course you have residency qualification and transfers...but for the most of us, it's a simple given, a finite thing. We don't have a choice...and that adds a different dimension. We feel very proud and very honoured.

Commercialised sports do not necessarily disrupt such autotelic goods, but they do have a tendency to do so (Walsh and Guilianotti, 2007). The sporting community should therefore strive to protect such goods by ensuring that they are not undermined. For as Morgan (2006, 31-32) argues:

... the real worry is not just that for the right price athletes are willing to forsake their national and political identities ... for flimsy corporate ones but that they are willing as well to forsake their very practical identities, those identities that underwrite what makes their lives in general (and their sporting lives in particular) meaningful, for a pot of money. This is, to put it mildly, scary stuff. For tethering one's identity to the vagaries of a fickle market is not only asking for trouble, for being sold out at a moment's notice when a better prospect comes along, but asking far too little of oneself (i.e. settling for a monetary calculation of the meaning of one's life). If this does not amount to moral suicide, I do not know what does.

Although one must accept that money is a necessary aspect of modern sport, the sphere of national representation needs to be regulated in line with a meaningful account of national identity, so that the virtues of ISR are given the necessary conditions to flourish.

ISR and the Pragmatic Pathology

This second pathology concerns cases where the market 'destroys or diminishes the good-making features upon which commercial profits are based' (Walsh and Guilianotti 2007, 109). In terms of ISR, the worry is that if the current trend of athletes representing nations based on tenuous attachments continues, the whole logic and attraction of such competition are diminished. Walsh and Guilianotti (2007, 109) discuss what they term the 'manifest image of sport' referring to the central elements that draw the general public to sport. With respect to international sport, the manifest image is primarily based on its nationalistic aspect, which defines the uniqueness and attraction of such competition and its consumption. As Reynolds (1990, 6) argues, spectators are drawn to such competition 'not so much by the spectacle, by the ritual, or by an appreciation of the skills involved, but because there is a competitor or a team

whom we feel is representing us'. Nonetheless, increasing pressures of globalisation and transnational commercialisation seem to create some tensions. Moreover, as Maguire (2005) argues, the control of elite level sport has drifted increasingly into the hands of trans-national corporations and business oligarchs, who prefer sport's commercial potential to be unencumbered by rigid national ties that might restrain economic interests. Such controlling forces, however, remain acutely aware that elite athletic performance grounded in some form of manifest nationalism provides a potent mix that continues to accentuate sport's attraction (Guttmann 1992). Likewise, though modern sports professionals might be motivated by instrumental gain, they readily accept the rich economic rewards that can be harvested through triumphing at sporting events between nations.

Walsh and Guilianotti (2007) argue that sporting bodies and athletes are treading a fine line in this respect, for if the manifest image of sport is sufficiently undermined then it could diminish the value of such competition as a commodity. If the ideals and values of ISR become illusory, a mere simulacrum of genuine national representation, the allure of such competition may be lost. The worry is that, if current trends in ISR continue, it is not at all clear to what extent such competition could still be described as 'international'. Consequently, the attraction of such competition would be significantly compromised. Morgan (2006, 49) makes the same point lucidly:

The heavy symbolism of the athletes marching in union together behind their flags and outfitted in a common national uniform in the opening ceremonies – and the no-less-heavy symbolism in which athletes drop their patriotic pose and in a cosmopolitan gesture mingle with members of all the other countries in the closing ceremony – crucially depend for their significance on the fact that these national and international identities and symbols really mean something to everyone concerned, especially to the participants. However, when athletes change countries to compete in the Olympics (as often as some change their clothes) and when their reason for doing so is based on financial calculations of success and the size of the markets of the countries they represent, these symbols become farcical.

Many of the participants seemed to agree with Morgan that such trends are somehow undermining the authenticity of international sports. As a former Welsh football international noted:

I could give you hundreds of examples when I hear people saying 'I refuse to watch Wales anymore', 'it's a joke who is allowed to play for them', 'how on earth did he not play for Wales?', 'how did Northern Ireland pick him up?'. I mean it has reached the stage where John Toshack [the then national Team Manager] is being criticised for not finding out that a cousin of someone's grandparent had been on holiday in Tenby.

Interestingly, a number of the respondents made a comparison between international sports and professional football. They suggested that it was too late for professional football teams to regain this sense of local identity, and that it was fundamentally important that the same thing should not happen in respect to international competition. For example, as a specialist sports lawyer argued:

Oh I agree with you, but I think it's a lost cause actually. Simply because sport, soccer anyway ... is a business and it is dominated by capitalist principles and there is no way it's going back. When I discovered that Wimbledon football club didn't have anyone from Wimbledon in it, and what's more the club wasn't even in Wimbledon anyway, and then it changes its name to something else, well it's meaningless..... I have a bigger issue ... if you look at rugby at club level ... and football at club level, that highlights I think the potentially damaging trends to move away ... it is not just a question of national identity but of local identity as well. I'm no longer a great supporter of football at top level in the UK because I think all it is ... is a collection of highly paid international sportsmen, and they are no doubt fantastic footballers ... but in fact they could be playing anywhere, because it's money. I think English football was at its morally strongest thirty to forty years ago when the like of Arsenal ... generally ... most of their players were certainly British players, and many of them were local to Arsenal. Manchester United the same ... all the great teams of the 60s and 70s, there was a much stronger local community connection between the players and the club. That has gone, and I think it's a bad thing

and I am very anxious to make sure that the disease, which I think it is, doesn't infiltrate into sport at international level. This is why I think that steps taken by governing bodies of sport and, in particular, international governing bodies to preserve national identity are extremely important.

The worry here then is that the over-commercialisation of sport could threaten the authenticity of national and cultural components that make such competition attractive in the first place. This suggests that excessively liberal and open eligibility regulations towards ISR may well be self-defeating, since they may damage the long-term health (and indeed marketability) of international competition.

As has been argued, the virtues of international sporting competition are not merely restricted to the sporting sphere. We have argued that the moral significance of such competition primarily lies with their ability to display and articulate the virtues of a liberal and 'sincere internationalism'. This is at the heart of de Coubertin's 'sincere internationalism' which views sport as one of the fruitful means of recognising different peoples (and their associated values) within a wider international framework. If some athletes represent nations primarily based on financial or career-orientated motivations, however, then the potential of the sports-nationalism relation in promoting and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue is severely undermined. What we have is international competition that is distorted, since those who are doing the representing are not those who authentically embody the various particular cultures.

The aforementioned case of Maryam Yusuf Jamal further illustrates this concern, especially in contrast with Boulmerka's tale. In 2006, she won a gold medal for Bahrain at the Osaka world championships, but media pictures following the event showing Jamal wearing shorts and a midriff-baring top caused outrage in Bahrain. It would seem that Jamal's tale, just as Boulmerka's, should be considered a morally significant social tale. There is, however, a fundamental difference. Jamal's attachment to Bahrain is so tenuous that she is not really representing anything. The narrative that tale generates is largely isolated from any particular culture and is certainly not connected to Bahraini culture and way of life. Although her actions initially caused some outrage in Bahrain, the fact that Jamal lives and trains in Switzerland, and the fact that she is not Muslim (whilst the majority of Bahrainis are) significantly weakens the

emancipatory narrative that her exploits ought to have illuminated within the international community.

If national representatives are not genuinely expressive or representative of the culture in question, then international sporting competition fails to implement the virtues of a liberal and sincere internationalism, since it leads to distortion and misunderstanding. Under such conditions, the significance of sport as the gestation ground for a sincere internationalism may be lost, and consequently our understanding and appreciation of different cultures, values and ways of life will for many remain somewhat obtuse and weakly articulated (Morgan 1997).

ISR and the Distributive Pathology

The third pathology we wish to discuss is where ISR regulations and practices actively sustain distributive injustice. This pathology of ISR is specifically focused on those athletes who are primarily motivated to represent a nation by financial considerations. Although this was also the case in respect to the previous two pathologies, they were also relevant to athletes who might have been motivated by personal gain (such as career, fame, success) or indeed a pragmatic choice (for those who were not good enough to represent their own/preferred country). As some of the aforementioned cases illustrate, many athletes seem to have chosen to represent a nation primarily for financial rewards. In such instances it is the market that effectively allocates the athletes. The inherent problem with this is that the market deals in the exchange of goods and labour for money or reward, and in doing so, ignores principles such as equality, merit, or desert (Walsh and Guilianotti 2007). The immediate worry is that the world is not equal in its distribution of wealth and power. This means that some countries and cultures will benefit more from ISR regulations, which allow the market to allocate athletes for national representation. Like Walsh and Guilianotti (2007, 90), we believe such processes are pernicious, for if such social goods are commodified “the wealthy will be able to gain access to most goods in greater proportion to less well off members of society”. This concern was clearly shared by some of the respondents in the context of ISR. As a former professional footballer and sport administrator argued:

The forces of money are variable and none of us are naïve enough to think that there isn't a financial dimension to international sport. The qualification thing is really fundamental ... the example of the Middle East, Far East of buying ... let's be fair, developing nations' athletes, because although these nations are developed in sport, in distance running and middle-distance running, they're very poor countries as well and that strikes me as a form of imperialism or colonialism which I don't think is right in international sport ... You take that to an extreme and it would mean that in football, for the sake of argument, England could buy talented players from our development schemes in Wales and Northern Ireland and Scotland because they're a bigger country and they've got more money. That's a form of imperialism, economic imperialism.

An example of this pathology arose in the 2004 Olympic Games that included 270 naturalised athletes.⁶ Detailed statistics show how the majority of these individuals had grown up in less powerful countries and eventually competed for the richer and more powerful nations. Poli (2007) discovered how the balance in naturalizations on a continental or sub-continental scale is positive for Western Europe (+67), America (+22) and Oceania (+12) whilst negative for Eastern Europe (-47), Africa (-36) and Asia (-18). This realisation has significant implications regarding the potential of sport in expressing a liberal and sincere internationalism. The morally uplifting content of de Coubertin's notion of 'sincere internationalism' is undermined if we allow ISR rules that favour particular countries. We have argued that what distinguishes the moral credentials of sporting events such as the Olympics is their potential as an arena which might allow us to reach beyond our particular national communities. But such credentials can only be upheld if such international movements are neutral in terms of the various particular communities that constitute them. If this international space is itself undermined by allowing a conception of national representation that favours some particular cultures over others, then the normative reading of international sporting competition will have no purchase. It means that some nations have the capacity to acquire superior athletes than those nationals already at their disposal and strengthen their position in dominating the international sporting scene. The immediate objection to this is that the weaker nations will lose many of their best talents, hindering their potential on the international scene. The more pressing issue, however, is that the action of a few rich countries will also suffocate the counter-hegemonic potential of

international sports as a means for smaller and weaker nations to achieve recognition as worthy 'conversational partners' rather than 'monological foils' (Morgan 2000). If this is the case, international sports no longer serve as a foothold for cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, but rather as an arena that obscures such differences.

Perhaps the best example of the hegemonic nature of this pathology is the way in which young talented rugby players from the Pacific Islands (Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga) who may have represented their country of birth have been appropriated by New Zealand and Australia in order to strengthen the quality of their player base. Some (Grainger 2006) have criticized the New Zealand rugby union for marginalising Samoan rugby by purposefully retaining promising Samoan rugby talent within the New Zealand system. This means Samoan rugby is almost a "feeder program" or an "academy" for New Zealand rugby. The presence of Samoans in the All Blacks is by no means the embodiment of flexible national identities but rather a thinly veiled veneer of cosmopolitanism – the Samoan All Black is merely an emigrant resource (Grainger, 2006). Although the Pacific Island nations have also benefited from some 'unwanted' New Zealanders, this only further highlights the corrupting and hegemonic nature of such practices, for it is fairly clear to discern that the All Blacks have the most to gain in respect to such reciprocity. As one former Welsh rugby international and current sports administrator seems to recognise:

Well, there is a very close connection between the South Sea Islands and Australia and New Zealand. That is, to all intents and purposes ... Australia and New Zealand are the big brothers, but they depend on the support of these smaller nations in many ways. So is it any surprise at all that the best talent from these islands ... for economic and social reasons, tend to get snapped up by the bigger countries?

Critics of the sport-nationalism relation argue that any attempt to justify particular attachments as a placeholder for bringing the diverse cultures of the world together is a waste of time. These critics would therefore view de Coubertin's 'sincere internationalism' as being a kind of 'Western ethnocentrism' or 'postcolonial imperialism' (Parry 2006, 196). Although we agree that the sport-nationalism relation sometimes serves such a cultural and economic imperialism, we

do not agree that it is intrinsically so. The problem is not with the relation itself, but with regulations that privilege power, money, and politics over meaningful national representation. There is a danger that the values of Olympism are merely a liberal and cosmopolitan veneer to more a more vulgar and concealed ethnocentrism. But this realisation should not lead to the conclusion that the sport-nationalism relation is inherently problematic, but rather to the view that sporting authorities should limit the pathologies outlined. Abhorring the sports-nationalism relation outright or failing to ensure that ISR is limited to athletes who are genuinely connected with the culture in question are two sides of the same coin. Both fail to implement the potential of sport in fulfilling the virtues of a liberal and sincere internationalism that might facilitate the kind of species consciousness that de Coubertin envisaged.

Drawing on the work of Walzer (1983), Walsh and Guilianotti (2007) argue that different goods need to be distributed variously in respect to distributive principles. For example, the sphere of affection might best be served by the distributive principle of 'free-exchange', whilst something like charity needs to be distributed by principles of need or desert. We have argued that ISR rules and practices become pathological when they are distributed via the principle of 'free-exchange'. In this sense, national identity is fundamentally at odds with being distributed by the market. When athletes are commodified and sold to the highest bidders, then the goods associated with international sports are enjoyed to a greater extent by those who have the means to acquire such athletes. This is a form of distributive injustice that ought to be rejected. It does not follow, however, that international sports should be served by a principle of equality, so that all athletes are shared equally among all nations. This would also undermine the purpose and values that can emerge from such sporting competition. Rather, ISR should function according to a principle of desert whereby nations would be represented by individuals who have a meaningful and genuine cultural familiarity with that nation. We argue that smaller and less populous nations, which will naturally have a smaller pool of talent, can perfectly well accept this situation, whereas they may find it justifiably difficult to do so when the talent they do produce is sometimes taken away by the highest bidders.

Implications for Policy

Although it is beyond the scope and intent of this paper to provide a definitive regulatory framework for ISR regulations, we will briefly consider how the normative proposals relate to the IOC's eligibility regulations. The current IOC regulations currently stand as follows:

1. Any competitor in the Olympic Games must be a national of the country of the NOC which is entering such competitor
2. Bye-law 1 – In the case of dual nationals, the individual can choose which nation to represent.
3. Bye-law 2 – A competitor who has represented a country and who has changed their nationality or has acquired a new nationality, may represent their new country provided that at least three years have passed since the competitor last represented their former country. This period may be reduced or cancelled by the IOC Executive Board (with the agreement of the NOC's).

Whilst these regulations might seem fairly unproblematic, we argue that they provide a fertile ground for the pathologies of ISR to thrive. These regulations are predominantly based on the legal national status of individuals (regulation 1) and therefore dependent on the legal citizenship processes of individual nations. Firstly, although issues of legal nationality and ISR share some common features, they are not coextensive. Contrary to some literature in sports law (de Groot 2006), we argue that lawful nationality is neither necessary nor sufficient for ISR. The main reason for this is due to the significant differences in the application of this regulation within institutions. Nationality requirements of different nation states differ significantly. For example, nationality can be acquired in Belgium after three years of residence, whilst it takes eight years in Germany and twelve years in Switzerland (de Groot 2006). Further to this, residency is only one method of acquiring nationality: birth, ancestry and marriage are among the plethora of other variables to take into consideration. What makes this regulation even more problematic in respect to the pathologies outlined is that the naturalisation process of talented athletes is frequently rapidly accelerated (Chiba et al 2001). Although it may seem that bye-law 2 may inhibit such processes, this waiting period of three years between representing another country may be decreased or cancelled altogether if both national federations agree. Perhaps

more problematic is the fact such agreements between national federations often involve a financial aspect Tarasti (2007). It should therefore be immediately clear that ISR regulations which are based on legal nationality do not result in an equitable process of establishing national sporting eligibility. As some of the aforementioned examples demonstrate, athletes and governing bodies are taking advantage of this legal nationality regulation, and allows athletes to represent countries to which they have very little cultural attachment or familiarity. This, we argue, clearly allows the moral pathologies of ISR to flourish. The IOC's regulations, which are primarily based on the legal status of individuals, are weakly constituted to preserve the integrity and virtues that can emerge through international sporting competition. For this reason, we propose that legal nationality should not be a requirement for ISR, and that the IOC ought to follow the lead of other international sporting bodies (such as the IRB) in creating a separate sporting national eligibility regulations.⁷

The regulations of various international sporting bodies vary significantly, and usually are a combination based on legal nationality, birth, ancestry, and residence rulings. Whilst place of birth and the nationality of parents or grandparents are certainly relevant to issues of ISR, we believe that these are also potentially problematic in fuelling the moral pathologies of ISR. Our preference is to argue that ISR rules should primarily operate a residency requirement. A residency-based requirement is attractive for two reasons. Firstly, it resonates with de Coubertin's view that one of the virtues of international sporting competition is its capacity for genuine cultural expression and representation. ISR should thus be centred on cultural achievement and familiarity, so that the representatives share deep-rooted and enduring bonds, resemblances, and cultural connections with their fellow representatives. Following de Coubertin and Morgan (1995) we argue that such a healthy expression of one's own patriotic commitments is conducive towards a love of humanity more generally. The second feature that makes a residency requirement attractive is that fact that it could avoid a rigid and insular conception of national identity. Such a residency would welcome the possibility of cultural and national assimilation but would reflect the fact that whilst affection for a country can take shape in a number of ways and at various rates, authentic attachment and affection only develops through engagement over time. Such a residency ruling should therefore be sufficiently long to ensure individuals are immersed to some degree in that culture to allow for the 'contamination' of one's prior patriotic affections with new ones.

Conclusion

In this paper we have rejected the antagonistic reading of the sports-nationalism relation and have utilized de Coubertin's notion of 'sincere internationalism' to outline some of the values that can emerge through ISR. Drawing on Walsh and Guilianotti's (2007) general framework of the moral pathologies of hyper-commercialisation in sport, we have argued that the virtues of ISR are undermined when they lead to any of the pathologies outlined, namely: motivation/instrumental, pragmatic, and distributive. We are not arguing that everyone will find it best to stay in their native countries and cultures, and it must be accepted that international eligibility regulations must take into account migration and potential cultural assimilation. The argument here is that evidence strongly suggests that these processes are often the result of forces that we should deplore, namely the corruptive and parasitic nature of hyper-commercialisation. Sporting authorities should try to limit the possibility of ISR leading to such pathologies, and we believe there are significant steps that could be taken by international sporting bodies towards this end. In pursuing this line of inquiry we are acutely aware that we are trading closely with the values associated with vulgar nationalism, of emphasising the difference between 'us' and 'them', and this is no virtue to be promoted. But the fact that vulgar manifestations of nationalism, of totally fixed conceptions of national identity are to be shunned, does not mean that all questions on the limits of national identity are taboo. We argue that ensuring that ISR is a meaningful expression of national and cultural identities is crucial for the integrity and ethical standing of such competition. It is only by doing so that we will fully utilise sport's potential for the direction of national attachments towards constructive and peaceful outcomes, and thereby fulfil Coubertin's admirable vision.

Notes

¹ McFee (2004) acknowledges that this term may have been first formulated by Parry (1988) but that their uses of the term are somewhat different. Our use of the term is consistent with McFee (2004) - which is not to say that it does not share much with Parry's (1988) conception.

² Under IOC rules, three years must pass before an athlete can represent another nation. Such a waiting period can be dismissed if both national federations come to an agreement.

³ The term 'naturalised' indicates the process of having acquired citizenship, where the individual previously had citizenship with another country.

⁴ This is not intended as a criticism of the work – only that the aims of this paper are different.

⁵ This empirical investigation is part of a wider unpublished PhD thesis.

⁶ Naturalised athletes indicate those individuals who have acquired a new nationality.

⁷ There seems to be an obvious parallel with the World Anti-Doping Agency here. Some National Governing Bodies aren't as stringent as others. This inconsistency sets up an unfairness.

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