

Name:

Class:

## SPORTS

### Essential questions

- What is sport?
- What is the value/power of sport? What are some issues/conflicts in sports?
- What are some changes in the sporting world? What threats or opportunities do these changes present?
- How does Singapore view sports?

## WHAT IS SPORT?

### Definition of sports

**'Sport'** describes the overall concept while **'sports'** is used to refer to multiple activities.

**Sport:** Organised, competitive and skillful athletic activity which requires commitment and fair play

### What qualifies as a true sport?

- **Is physical strength or exertion necessary?** Bowling and golf arguably do not require the same physical exertion as other sports but are similarly classified as such.
- **Is E-sports a sport?** For many, e-sports being a sport is *trusim*. It involves exertion of the brain and requires both fast reflexes and dexterity in the operation of controllers (much like car racing). This requires both talent and learnt skill which players pit against each other. Opponents argue that the lack of physical exertion precludes it from being seen as a sport.
  - Esports have been featured alongside traditional sports in Asia, and the International Olympic Committee has launched the first ever Olympics Esports Week in 2023. However, it has also received criticism for inadequate recognition of the gaming aspect of e-sports, comprising mostly of virtual recreation of traditional sports.

Skillful athletic activity might not require extensive physical exertion but would include finesse and acumen. Athletic ability is influenced by both nature and nurture.

### Type of sports

**Competitive sports** are sports played with an emphasis on winning, resulting in a high cost in terms of the mental and physical strain put on athletes.

- Stakes are high as athletes base their livelihoods and reputation on their performance. There is an element of rivalry between players, clubs, managers and fans.

- There is also great commercialisation given advertisements and sponsorships,

**Leisure/recreational/amateur sports** are sports enjoyed during one's free time predominantly as a way to have fun, keep healthy and develop and pursue interests.

### Major sporting events

- Summer/Winter Olympic games
- Paralympic games (Parallel Olympics which started as rehabilitation of soldiers after WW2 in London hospitals in 1948)
- Soccer -World Cup
- Tennis -Grand Slam Tournaments
- Basketball -World Basketball Championship
- Cycling -Tour de France
- Swimming -FINA (Federation Internationale de Natation) World Aquatics Championships
- Racing -F1 (Formula One) Grand Prix
- Singapore -Southeast Asian Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Youth Olympic games, F1, Singapore Open (Golf)

### Ethos and philosophy of sport

- **Sportsmanship:** Fair play, respect for rules and traditions. Integrity (abiding by the letter and spirit of rules and concept of honour), with self-control, accountability and graciousness in both victory and defeat.
- **Perseverance and excellence:** The pursuit of sport played a major role in Hellenistic (Greek) culture, where striving for perfection in body and mind served as one of society's principal unifying activities (Lunt & Dyreson, 2014). When Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the Olympic Movement, sports were regarded as character-building activities.
- **Harmony, unity and teamwork:** People learn transferable life skills such as putting a team's needs above their own, and concepts such as responsibility, accountability and cooperation.
- **Apolitical and secular:** So that sports can be a neutral platform and act as a universal language for people of diverse backgrounds to come together to understand each other better.

## VALUE AND POWER OF SPORTS

"Sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the United Nations to improve the lives of people around the world. Sport builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace."

-Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General  
on Sport for Development and Peace

### Value/functions/power of sports at a glance:

Functions of sports	Support with unique characteristics of sports (adapted from ChatGPT)
Holistic development through fostering physical, social and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular participation in sports improves cardiovascular health, builds strength and endurance, enhances motor skills, and develops coordination and flexibility.</li> </ul>




# Analysing & unpacking: To what extent are these values applicable?

emotional growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of <b>bodily kinesthetic intelligence</b> (fine motor-control and sense of timing).</li> <li>• Physical activity releases <b>endorphins</b>, which are <b>natural mood boosters</b>. Engaging in sports also improves focus, concentration, and cognitive abilities, leading to improved mental well-being.</li> <li>• It provides opportunities to <b>connect with teammates, coaches, opponents, and spectators</b>. Team sports, in particular, encourage collaboration, cooperation, and effective communication. These interactions help develop essential social skills, including leadership, sportsmanship, empathy, and respect for others.</li> <li>• Sports teach individuals <b>discipline</b> and <b>character development</b>. Athletes learn to adhere to rules, follow routines, and maintain a consistent practice schedule. They set both short-term and long-term goals, develop strategies to accomplish them, and learn from failures and setbacks.</li> </ul>
Social integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports often require individuals to <b>work together as a team</b>, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration. People from various backgrounds come together to watch or play sports, sharing emotions, celebrations, and disappointments. This shared experience can bridge gaps and foster a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• International sporting events <b>bring athletes, spectators, and media from different countries</b>, promoting cultural understanding and appreciation.</li> <li>• Many sports organizations and initiatives focus on promoting social integration and inclusivity. They <b>create programs specifically designed to engage individuals from marginalized communities, at-risk youths, people with disabilities, or those facing social challenges</b>.</li> </ul>
Economic development via commercialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sports industry encompasses various sectors, including sports equipment manufacturing, sports apparel, sports media, sports technology, and sports-related services (e.g., sports medicine, sports analytics, sports consulting)</li> <li>• Sports offer lucrative opportunities for sponsorships and advertising, with companies capitalizing on the exposure and reach of sports events.</li> <li>• Major sports events and tournaments <b>attract a large number of spectators, athletes, and officials from around the world</b>. This influx of visitors stimulates the tourism and hospitality industries.</li> <li>• Hosting sports events often requires the development or improvement of infrastructure, including stadiums, arenas, training facilities, and sports complexes. The construction, maintenance, and operation of such facilities contribute to economic growth, create jobs, and attract investments. Additionally, these facilities can be utilized for various purposes beyond sports, such as concerts, conferences, and exhibitions, further stimulating economic activity.</li> </ul>
Forging national identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting events often <b>incorporate national symbols, flags, and anthems</b>, which are powerful symbols of national identity. When athletes compete under the national flag and the national anthem is played, it reinforces a sense of identity, reminding citizens of their shared values, heritage, and history.</li> <li>• Sporting rivalries between nations, such as in soccer, cricket, or basketball, can <b>evoke intense emotions and passion among fans</b>.</li> <li>• Sports often serve as platforms for showcasing a nation's culture,</li> </ul>



	<p>traditions, and values. Whether it's through pre-match ceremonies, traditional attire, or cultural performances, sports provide opportunities for nations to display their unique cultural identity on an international stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When athletes achieve success, they become symbols of national pride and inspiration. <i>Their stories of dedication, perseverance, and triumph resonate with citizens</i>, shaping their perception of national identity and instilling a sense of shared pride.</li> </ul>
Peace building and post-disaster relief via normalisation of lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical rehabilitation of disaster survivors. Engaging in sports helps restore mobility, strength, and flexibility, aiding in the recovery process.</li> <li>Participating in sports activities can help alleviate stress, anxiety, and trauma symptoms. It promotes a sense of normalcy, reduces feelings of helplessness, and provides a positive outlet for emotional expression.</li> <li>Sports can help restore a sense of normalcy by providing structured activities and routines. Participating in sports allows individuals to regain a sense of control and familiarity, which is crucial for the psychological and emotional recovery process.</li> <li>By engaging in sports together, individuals can form connections, rebuild social networks, and strengthen community bonds.</li> </ul>

Sport plays a central role to players, coaches, officials and spectators. It is part of national school curricula, sports news and public policy measures addressing everything from anti-social behaviour to obesity. It is not far-fetched to say that sports play a vital role in education and social engineering.

	<p><b>Food for thought: Questions to drive conceptual understanding</b></p> <p>'It is not winning, but taking part, which matters.' How acceptable is this as an approach to life? (2022)</p> <p>How far is failure an essential part of success? (2018)</p> <p>How effectively is public health promoted and managed in your society? (2015)</p> <p>'Education should only be concerned with what is useful in life.' Discuss. (2013)</p>
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As sports evolve to become institutionalised, rules-governed and competitive, sports become implicated in the process of social development, as well as power relations and ideological formation (Guttman 1994; Sage, 1998). Our social and political context shape both the sport and our responses to it.

While we wish for the humanness of sporting achievements not to be consumed by political divisions and tribalism, it cannot be detached from its political and social grounding. Sometimes, it is precisely this grounding which imbues sports with much of its meaning.

*Identity stakeholders involved and analyse how their interests/values conflict with each other.*

*Ideal vs Reality.*



## I. SPORTS AND POLITICS

Ideally, we should separate sports and politics, to ensure that sporting prowess is "pure" - expressions of sublime skill and awe-inspiring endurance which captures the genius of human athleticism. But we should also recognise how they are inseparable as sport does not exist in a vacuum.

### (A) Sports are used to promote awareness of social and political movements.

Even athletes use sports as a platform to make a stand:

- Eg. In 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, 2 Black medal-winning American athletes, were booed and expelled from the Olympics for their podium protests against racism.
- Eg. LeBron James was told to "shut up and dribble" by a Fox News anchor in 2018 in response to the three-time NBA champion's comments on racism in the US.
- Eg. Taking the Knee before football matches became widespread in 2020, as a stand against racism.

However, critics have pointed out how this has politicised sports. Athletes, despite their enormous followings, are also told that they are not qualified enough to discuss matters off the field and often face enormous backlash.

Do athletes not have the right to speak? The separation of sports from politics is a fictitious construct, as noted by academics like Professor Douglas Hartmann. Following the recent surge calling for equality and inclusiveness, sporting bodies have taken unprecedented steps.

- Eg. The West Indies cricket team was given the all-clear to wear the BLM emblem on their collar during their Test series in England.

Sporting bodies' involvement in such protests are also viewed with skepticism - they are seen to be part of a larger branding and marketing movement - and genuineness can be questioned. There is worry that such concessions would be temporary or that reactions would differ when players take on the next issue. It remains to be seen how sports associations would react to issues considered more sensitive.

*genuine support?*

### (B) Sports used to build bridges across communities and nations.

*ping pong diplomacy  
(Vietnam War)*

Sports can sow the seeds of camaraderie and peace through friendly rivalry. The wide reach of sports make it an ideal vehicle to promote values and to demonstrate political solidarity or disagreement:

- Eg. India and Pakistan used what is known as "Cricket Diplomacy" to strengthen the relationship between the two nations in the time of chaos after the 2008 Mumbai attack.
- Eg. North and South Korea marched under a united flag at the 2018 Winter Olympics Opening ceremony in Pyeongchang in a symbolic break in tensions between the two



nations over North Korea's nuclear program. They also formed a joint women's ice hockey team, making it the first time they have contributed athletes to the same team at the Olympics.

Yet, sports can also be a platform to establish enmity and cementing differences.

- Eg. The 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has been hit by a flurry of diplomatic boycotts (athletes can still attend, just not diplomats) from countries including the US, Australia, and Britain, because of widespread allegations of Chinese atrocities against the Uyghur community.
- Eg. After Russia invaded Ukraine, the International Olympic Committee and FIFA moved to ban both Russia and its ally Belarus from competition.

may not be a meaningful punishment

The boycotting of participation in major sporting events may have limited impact. Furthermore, banning athletes from participation hurts them the most without necessarily creating concrete changes. Nevertheless, perhaps the way to think about 'boycotts' is not as punishment, but rather as taking away a weapon, as the state now cannot use sport to shape its image and to engage in "sportswashing".

### (C) Projection of soft power

#### (i) Sportswashing via hosting of sporting events

Major sporting events can provide a platform to showcase the country's economic might and unique aspect of its culture, which raises the prestige of the country (Dennis and Grix, 2012).

- Eg. The 2008 Olympics hosted by Beijing was widely seen to be a milestone in China's expansion of soft power. Its opening ceremony framed China as a model of spectacle and national collaboration. Directed by filmmaker Zhang Yimou at the cost of US\$100 million, the event lasted over 4 hours and featured 15,000 performers.
- Eg. The Rio Olympic Games 2016 showcased to the world that Brazil was a stable and emerging market for future investment and tourism by being able to tackle worrying concerns of Zika and security to make the world event a success.

Nevertheless, a positive image is neither guaranteed nor sustained. The international spotlight and scrutiny could reveal issues such as poor governance and human rights violations, which diminishes the country's standing.

- Eg. In the Beijing Olympics 2008, Reuters estimated that 1.5 million residents of Beijing were evicted for the Olympics. The use of child labour in the manufacturing of official Beijing 2008 souvenirs and food safety concerns for athletes and tourists also emphasised China's poor planning.
- Eg. According to Amnesty International, Qatar exploited its migrant workers with forced labour, unpaid wages and excessive working hours in the years before the 2022 World Cup. Qatar's 'Kafala' system of sponsorship-based employment legally binds foreign workers to their employers, which prevents them from changing jobs or leaving the country without employers' permission -trapping them in a cycle of abuse.



long term vs short term // Ease of and tendency being distracted by glamour in short term vs difficulty in holding governments/companies accountable for wrongdoings which require effort and time.

Sportswashing is the use of sports to present a sanitized, friendlier version of a political regime or operation. This can be done through the act of sponsoring a sports team or event in order to distract from bad practices elsewhere. This tactic is often used by governments (and companies) with poor environmental or human rights records.

- Eg. 2023 PGA & DP World Tour merger with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund for Golf was seen as sportswashing, where the use of vast amounts of money is used to muscle one's way into top-tier golf and to distract from poor human rights records.

#### (ii) Through victory at sporting competitions

A sweeping victory at the podium can be testament to the superiority of a country's sovereign strength. The idea that international competition can be channeled through athlete prowess continues to resonate, as winning medals is an easily quantifiable metric of national achievement. This inspires less-prominent nations to celebrate when they win a single medal, even in a minor sport.

- Eg. National fanfare over Joseph Schooling's gold medal.
- Eg. Media celebration of Singapore attaining world no. 1 in Tchoukball.
- Eg. American anxiety over their domination in the gymnastics scene with the withdrawal of Simone Biles in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics.
- Eg. Athletic superiority allowed East Germany to carve out an identity separate from both West Germany and Soviet Union.
- Eg. Russia kept using sports to look strong (instituting a state-sponsored doping program to increase the country's medal count) and friendly.

on the surface vs deeper inspection

Also, this intuition seems naive. The nature of power in international relations has more to do with setting terms of debate rather than piling on gold medals. In this context, a system which allows dominant competitors to withdraw might be more exemplary than one which forces them to compete.

- Eg. Simone Biles was victimised by the regulators of US women gymnastics, which failed to protect her and others from a sexual abuser. The fact that she was free to put her health first instead of jeopardising it in pursuit of national prestige by withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympic Games says something about the country she represents.

#### (D) Debate over nationalities of athletes

The recruitment of foreign-born athletes and naturalizing them is a usual practice amongst countries, in order to boost sport competitiveness. In light of globalisation and the rise of dual-citizenship athletes, this phenomenon is becoming more common.

- Eg. US-born NBA player Matisse Thybulle only spent seven years in Australia as a child but because he maintained dual Australia-US citizenship he was able to play with the Australian basketball team at last year's Tokyo Olympic Games.

However, questions about their loyalty inevitably rises, and can come under intense media scrutiny which parallels rises in international relation tensions.

Do sporting victories belong to nations or to individuals?  
Can sport be truly apolitical and about celebration of human excellence?



- Eg. Li Shixin, a Chinese-born Australian Olympic diver, was a star of China's diving team before moving to Australia in 2017. He competed in the Tokyo Olympics and told the ABC he "felt the pressure of winning" for Australia.
- Eg. Eileen Gu was born and trained in America but competes for China. This has raised the concern that she is winning medals for China and this results in the unhappiness of some Americans, who believed that she should have represented the US instead given that she has received the resources and training help from the US.



**Food for thought: Question to drive conceptual understanding**

Should we allow politics to mix with sport?

How do we determine or measure benefits/costs which are intangible or indirect? (eg. the impact of a sporting event on national identity, whether it is a unifying or divisive force, or its capacity to enhance a country's soft power)

## II. THE ECONOMICS OF SPORTS

### (A) Opportunities: Sports as a ticket out of poverty vs Commodification of athletes

For some individuals in developing countries, sports can be a way for rags-to-riches as sporting endeavours are relatively accessible.

- Eg. Many young Kenyans view distance running as a ticket out of poverty Dennis Kimetto was a subsistence farmer in Kenya until he decided to give running a try. Now he is one of the fastest marathoners in history and, by Kenyan standards, wealthy.
- Eg. Mohammed Ali became a huge influence for the young from slums eyeing a route out of poverty

Athletes are seen as prized possessions for bringing glory to the country. However, given their short-lived careers and fame, they are easily disposed. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by the fact that these athletes are often uneducated and have little experience in the real world, having dedicated their lives to training for their sport.

- Eg. China is dubbed the system that is better at producing poverty-stricken retired athletes than at churning out Olympic medalists as there is no sports system to care for its athletes. Zou Chunlan was a former weightlifting champion but ended up as a masseuse in a public bathhouse earning \$60 a month.
- Eg. Recently in 2023, Indonesia's former national footballer Kurnia Meiga sparked attention when he listed his football memorabilia like his medals and jerseys for sale on Instagram to raise money for his vision problems.



**Food for thought: Question to drive conceptual understanding**

'People who do the most worthwhile jobs rarely receive the best financial rewards.' To what extent is this true of your society? (2016)



## (B) Commercialisation has built a whole ecosystem of new jobs and opportunities

The sport industry is a multi-billion-dollar global industry propelled by enormous consumer demand. Sport is very closely tied to money because of the symbiotic relationships it shares with the media and corporations, with advertisements forming a key component. Both sport and the mass media try to reach people as spectators, fans and consumers.

Stadiums and arenas bear the names of businesses, and sponsors' logos appear on athletes' clothing and equipment. Televised broadcast of games and advertisements propel great growth in revenues for businesses. Star athletes are transferred for multi-million fees and professional sport franchises are sold for sums higher than the gross domestic products of some countries.

- Eg. Arsenal signed a deal with Emirates Airline to name their new stadium the Emirates Stadium.
- Eg. Advertising prices for the Super Bowl in 2023 on Fox were \$7 million for 30 secs of airtime.



### **Food for thought: Question to drive conceptual understanding**

'Advertisements are often entertaining, but they rarely affect consumer choice.'  
Is this your experience? (2007)

Cities invest, at the expense of other social projects, in the staging of major sporting events and to attract professional teams to their areas. Hosting sporting events places a country in the limelight of the world, boosting tourism rates, creating more jobs and possibly increasing the appeal of a country.

- Eg. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics Games was expected to boost Japan's economy by \$350 billion according to a report by the Bank of Japan (but of course it did not but led to debts)
- Eg. Unique case study: FIFA World Cup 2010 South Africa
  - Short term economic gains: Preparations for the tournament helped boost economic activity in South Africa by creating employment and increasing tourism and retail.
  - Long-term impact on business on the continent: Positive perceptions about the continent as a business destination; There is an increased interest of German companies to invest in South Africa. Investors and multinationals also view South Africa as a springboard into the rest of Africa.

However, oftentimes, the economic gains are not sustainable. Many governments tend to miss budget estimates. The spikes in job creation tended to be temporary (esp. the construction or manufacturing sectors), and does not outweigh the money pumped in, resulting in debts.

- Eg. The 1992 Barcelona Olympics left the central Spanish government \$4 billion in debt.
- Eg. The Athens Olympics aggravated Greece's debt problem. The government estimated the cost at \$11 billion.
- Eg. The 2010 Vancouver Winter Games left the city to grapple with an estimated \$1 billion debt.



### (C) Sport betting industry and rampant corruption undermines the ethos of sport

The sports betting industry is highly lucrative. The current estimations for both the illegal and legal markets suggest that the sports match-betting industry is worth between USD\$700bn and USD\$1tn. Referees and players can take bribes to fix matches, jeopardizing fair-play in sports and pure sportsmanship.

- Eg. Tennis was rocked by allegations of widespread match-fixing on the eve of the 2016 Australian Open. Suspicious betting patterns showed 16 players who could be guilty of throwing matches.
- Eg. FIFA, the football's world governing body, has been engulfed by claims of widespread corruption since 2015. The arrests and investigations cast doubt over the transparency and honesty for the process of allocating World Cup tournaments, electing its president, and the administration of funds, including those earmarked for improving football facilities in some of FIFA's poorer members.

One solution can be to legalise betting, as banning such practices would only drive them underground into the black market. Legalising it would allow for oversight and regulations.

- Eg. Singapore Pools allow for sports betting

## III. SOCIAL BENEFITS AND CONCERNS OF SPORTS

### (A) Idolisation of sporting heroes

*justified or excessive?*

Sport is thought to mould character and develop values such as discipline and honour. It is often seen as a platform where the most ordinary people could do extraordinary things.

- Eg. In a display of camaraderie, softball players Mallory Holtman and Liz Wallace carried an injured rival Sara Tucholsky around the bases - an act that contributed to their own elimination from the playoffs
- Eg. Despite being diagnosed with Sjogren's Syndrome in 2011, an energy-sapping autoimmune disease, Tennis star Venus William chose not to retire but altered her training regime to continue competing at the highest level



#### **Food for thought: Questions to drive conceptual understanding**

How is the human spirit reflected through our endeavours?  
Why do people care so much about trailblazers and heroes?

Despite the positive image and initiatives that sport has produced, sport too has produced many poor role models who either display poor character or poor decision-making. The huge attention and publicity amplify their mistakes further. Yet they can still have a redemption arc.

- Eg. American swimmer Michael Phelps, pleaded guilty to a drunken driving charge in 2004, and was pictured smoking a marijuana pipe barely a year after the 2008 Beijing Olympics. On both occasions, he issued a public apology. He lost a major sponsorship



deal with Kellogg. But in the following years, regained them and added Mazda and Subway, among others, to his endorsement portfolio.

- Eg. Tiger Woods and his numerous affairs. He took a sabbatical from golf in order to work on his marriage — and his image. He lost sponsorship deals with Accenture, AT&T, Gatorade and General Motors. But Nike stuck by him.
- Eg. In 2022, Joseph Schooling confessed to consuming cannabis overseas when he was on short-term disruption from full-time National Service to train and participate in the SEA Games. Though his drug test came back negative, his image took a beating. Nevertheless, brands have stuck by him.

**SELF-PRACTICE: 'Professional athletes should not be held out to be role models for young people today.' How far do you agree with this statement?**

Should: From whose perspective?

Evaluative lenses: Control vs Responsibility analysis [capability, legitimacy, importance, accessibility, feasibility, effectiveness, obligation/morality] / Cost vs Benefit / Ideal vs Reality

Arguments for why they should be role models:

- **Capability:** The hard work and sacrifices required to excel at sports and overcome stiff competition can inspire young people to work hard, persevere and overcome challenges.
- **Accessibility:** While professional athletes may not view themselves as role models, they are ultimately responsible as they are undoubtedly influential. Their impact on the lives of the young is magnified today with the use of social media, where young people have more exposure to their values and lifestyles.

Arguments against they should be held up as role models:

- **(Lack of) moral obligation:** Athletes often enjoy fame, fortune and a glamorous lifestyle, which can give a distorted perception of success. Yet, it is not always their job to educate and inform young people about values. Especially for impressionable minds, athletes' lifestyles can set unrealistic expectations for young people.
- **Legitimacy:** The truth is that many of these professional athletes are adolescents or young adults themselves who do not have the maturity to handle the immense pressure that accompanies the fame that they enjoy, let alone be role models to others. When they engage in controversial behaviour, it can undermine the other positive qualities they display and send the wrong message to impressionable minds.



**Food for thought: Other questions on resp of role models and the media**

As long as people in the public eye do their job well, does it matter what they do in private? (2009)

**(B) Fanfare: Camaraderie vs Violence and hooliganism**

Being a sports fan is a “very psychologically healthy activity,” says Daniel Wann, professor at Murray State University whose research program centers on the psychology of sport fandom.



Fandom connects us to other like-minded people, which satisfies our human need for belonging. Being part of a fan community also allows us to partake in common experiences and goals.

At sociological level, contagion theory notes that moods and behaviour can rapidly be communicated throughout groups or a crowd. This allows people on the same side to feel as if they are part of something bigger.

Yet, this can also have negative implications. Coupled with deindividuation, which is an individual's tendency to lose self-awareness in a large crowd, such that they feel anonymous and believe that they would not be singled out and held accountable, these have led to people engaging in behaviour they normally would not. Hooliganism is disruptive or unlawful behaviour such as rioting, bullying and vandalism, usually occurring with rowdy crowds at sporting events.

Die-hard fans with strong psychological connection to the team feel that being a follower is a central component of their social identity. Their team's victories and losses are felt as their own, such that they engage in such behaviour when emotions run high.

- Eg. At least 125 people died at Malang, during a 2022 Indonesian football match when thousands of angry home fans invaded the pitch and the police responded with tear gas triggering a stampede and riots.

Since it is difficult to rewire human behaviour, authorities have the responsibility to greatly limit alcohol consumption, enforce strict penalties for abuse and increase security.



***Food for thought: Questions on resp of the media***

Does violence in the visual media portray reality or encourage the unacceptable? (2015)

**(C) Stereotypes -reinforced or broken via sports?**

Sport breaks stereotypes and challenges gender norms. Sport develops skills in management, negotiation and decision-making that empower women.

- Eg. Sadaf Rahimi represented Afghanistan at the 2012 London Olympic games for the boxing event. She hopes to gain honour and dignity for herself and other Afghan women. Female boxers in Afghanistan do not have access to a real boxing ring.

Unfortunately, the issue of gender equality in sport is as old as sport itself. Strides have been made, yet gender equality in the athletics industry still has a long way to go. In fact, sometimes, sport becomes a platform where discrimination is rampant and highly visible.

- Women's sports tend to be verbally and visually set apart, emphasizing on its feminine nature.
  - Eg. Commentators use infantilizing languages like 'girls' and 'young ladies' on female athletes. Men athletes, never referred to as 'boys' usually were called 'men', linguistically granting them adult status.



- Eg. A study showed that women account for over 40% of athletes but receive less than 4% of coverage in the media. Men's sports are delivered with amplification and excitement, compared to the often full and matter-of-fact delivery of women's sports stories (Cooky, Messner & Musto).
- Women get paid less for doing the same job
  - Eg. The prize money for the Women's 2019 World Cup was about \$30 million while the men's 2018 World Cup was about \$400 million.
  - Eg. Despite the US women's soccer team working harder and performing better (ranked no. 1) than the men's team, they are paid at a rate of just over one-third of what the men get.
- Female athletes attire tend to be more revealing than men and such expectations are enforced upon them by rules
  - Eg. The Norwegian women's beach handball team was fined for refusing to play in bikini bottoms during a game in the sport's Euro 2021 tournament. The huge outcry led to an updating of rules by the International Handball Federation..
  - Eg. The German women's Olympic gymnastic team's decision to wear full-length unitards instead of traditional leotards at the Tokyo Olympics—a move for these young women to have a say in what to wear and what they are comfortable with.



***Food for thought: Questions on entrenched values***

To what extent are people judged more by their physical appearance than by their abilities? (2017)

Consider the view that some careers are better suited to one gender than the other. (2014)

**(D) Hosting sporting events can provide better amenities for locals**

Hosting popular sporting games requires extensive and quality infrastructure. The world's attention on the host country can also pressure it to embark on better policies.

- Eg. The 2012 London Games led to regeneration of Stratford. This rundown area was where most of the city's industrial refuse used to be dumped.
- Eg. Sochi Olympics led to better public transportation and better access for the disabled. The city was peppered with wheelchair ramps, tactile pavings and audio signals at major crosswalks.

However, it can also result in architectural white elephants, when host countries fail to have post-event plans. Infrastructure can fall into ruins when underused if sporting programmes are not in place.

- Eg. China's deserted and unmaintained former Kayaking and beach volleyball competition venues.
- Eg. Athen's abandoned Olympic village which was meant to be turned into public housing, but plans fell through.



disruptions are inherently neutral → depends on how we handle  
Urban planning must be sustainable, and governments need to ensure facilities would be used by their people following the event, to create better standards of living.

## CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE SPORTING WORLD

Cultural shifts and technological advancements, can give rise to both threats and opportunities for the development of sports and the values we seek to preserve.

### 1. Sports and technology

#### Sports technology and enhanced quality of life

Technology can enhance the lives of people with disabilities, allowing the pursuit of excellence in sport and making it more accessible.

- Eg. Carbon fibre running prostheses share close characteristics to biological limbs.

#### Sports technology and inequality/cheating

On another note, with the high stakes associated with competitive sports, athletes have attempted to improve performances via a variety of ways using technologies such as:

- Doping/Pharmaceutical substances
  - The most commonly used substances are androgenic agents such as anabolic steroids. These allow athletes to train harder, recover more quickly and build more muscle, but they can lead to kidney damage and increased aggression.
  - There are also stimulants, which make athletes more alert and can overcome the effects of fatigue by increasing heart-rate and blood flow. But they are addictive and, in extreme cases, can lead to heart failure.
- Equipment (eg. polyurethane swimsuits). Doping is no longer just about the athletes' bodies but also their technologically advanced equipment.
- Genetic enhancement?

Doping is prevalent in sports:

- Eg. Lance Armstrong was stripped off his seven-time champion record for the Tour de France. He was involved in the most sophisticated and successful doping ring in sports history, implicating his teammates.
- Eg. Maria Sharapova was tested positive for a banned substance at the 2016 Australian Open and was provisionally banned by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

### Can performance-enhancing methods in sports ever be justified?

Justified: Value and importance analysis; Proof that something is reasonable, valid or morally acceptable based on logical or ethical principles.

Case study: The Enhanced Game 2025. Dubbed the "Olympics on steroids" by its critics, the Enhanced Games are an upcoming Olympic-styled event in which performance-enhancing



drugs are permitted, and are set to debut in 2025. It would cover 5 categories of competition - track and field, swimming, gymnastics and combat sports.

#### Pro performance-enhancers:

- Asserts that such performance enhancing methods are justified as they align with central purpose of sports to **strive to be better** and the **natural human impulse** to create tools to achieve our goals (Brown, 1980; Savulescu, Foddy and Clayton, 2004)
- Such freedom allows us to respect athletes' bodily autonomy
- Helps us escape from the **unending cycle of cheating scandals** generated by **failing anti-doping system**
- Claims how doping is **morally equivalent** to the use of other **technological or medical interventions** which are widely accepted in sports (eg. cushioned running shoes, Lasik eye surgery), such as it would be **irrational to preclude other performance-enhancing substances** (Murray, 2018)

#### Anti performance-enhancers:

- **Undermines the central purpose of sports** which is to **cultivate sporting excellence**. **Extraneous aid** which **assists the athlete** to reach the desired outcome but without **demonstrating any further athletic skill** would **obscure rather than cultivate such athletic excellence**. *Athletic excellence is not attributed to outcome.*
- **Increases the significance of certain attributes** like strength over others such as **coordination or non-physical attributes** like **strategic skill**
- Exerts **dangerous influence** on society and vulnerable by **spreading acceptance of drug use and coercion**
- **Doping and drug harms the participants' health** *→ dangerous / untested drugs, posing serious health risk.*
- **Compromises fairness** when it provides well-off competitors with **unfair advantage** and **exacerbates inequality**
- **Intrinsically immoral** as it **violates principle of naturalness or authenticity**



#### ***Food for thought: Questions to understand motivations in science and technological advancements and drive conceptual understanding***

'Getting what one wants in life is what matters.' Discuss. (2014)

'Human need, rather than profit, should always be the main concern for scientific research.' Discuss. (2016)

#### What constitutes cheating regarding use of technology? Or is it just inequality?

There is the rise of technology doping, which is the practice of gaining a competitive advantage using sports equipment. This skews competition and erodes the noble ideal of sport. The future of sports is likely to be riddled with such controversies where athletes use supercharged equipment before governing bodies can react:

- Eg. Speedo's LZR swimsuit designed to reduce drag and increase performance debuted at the Beijing Olympics. 94% of races won and 98% of records broken were done with competitors using the suit.



Technology blurs the line of what is considered cheating.

- Eg. Athletes wearing the Nike ZoomX Dragonfly (super spikes) took 21 of 33 podium spots at individual track events. This led to gold medalist Warholm to criticise his opponent's shoes.

Especially in the international arena, the amount of technology a country can use is often based on who has more money to spend, and critics argue this creates an unfair edge in performance.

- Eg. The American, Canadian, and Russian freestyle ski teams had their uniforms made by Columbia Sportswear Company for the Sochi 2014 Olympics. New zipper design to cut down on weight and a snow camouflage pattern that helps mask body movement (Note that body movement is a key component for judging mogul skiers).
- Eg. Cambodian Kim Vanna was running on limbs donated by South Korea which were not designed for competitive running. He finished in an agonizing last place in the finals of the 2008 Beijing Paralympics.

More importantly, would we be able to recognise or define what constitutes acceptable behaviour regarding use of technology in sports? Experts like University of Colorado professor Roger Pielke Jr. and Matt Fedoruk, the chief science officer at the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, believe that the next major frontier is gene doping or more broadly, human enhancement:

- It is already commonplace for athletes to repair or replace bodies to improve their performance, like Lasik eye surgery
- What about Nick Diaz, an MMA fighter shaving down the bones in his face, to reduce the chances that he might get cut and bleed when hit?
- Hypothetically, athletes could alter their genes to produce more helpful hormones

As technological advances outpace regulations, grey areas will emerge.

Science and Technology as double-edged swords: both the problem and solution?

In Olympic sports, science has become an invaluable weapon wielded by dopers and anti-doping authorities, trying to stay one step ahead of one another. Perhaps this is why, in a 2022 survey conducted by USADA, 53% of the nearly 1,000 U.S. athletes questioned said they believe the science used to detect performance-enhancing substances is behind or far behind athletes' ability to dodge a positive test.

Case study: Erythropoietin, more commonly known as EPO, is a hormone that ramps up the production of red blood cells in the body.

- EPO has been banned in sports since the early 1990s, according to the World Anti-Doping Agency. But before the 2000 Sydney Olympics, anti-doping authorities didn't have a test that could detect it. Several high-profile cyclists, including Lance Armstrong, wound up testing positive for the substance over the next dozen years.
- Yet, new synthetic versions of the hormone began to appear. Third- and fourth-generation EPO molecules are structured differently than their predecessors and therefore require different types of tests.
- "As the drugs evolve, the tests have to evolve as well," Matt Fedoruk, the chief science officer at the US Anti-Doping Agency said. "Because it's not a one-test-fits-all type of approach."



A cursory look at the problem makes clear that performance enhancement techniques have raced ahead while standards and policies have not. While pessimism is in ample supply, particularly in the realm of doping challenges, modern solutions have begun to emerge. Effective regulatory mechanisms have been developed such as:

- Establishment of an independent court, the Court of Arbitration for Sport, to adjudicate athlete cases and a world-wide anti-doping agency (WADA).
- The US signatory of WADA, USADA has compiled an impressive record that includes exposing Lance Armstrong as a doper despite its limited resources.
- Eg. The Olympic Analytical Laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles, performs cutting-edge tests which aim to detect drugs with very short half-life
- Eg. World Anti-doping Agency uses AI to analyse large amounts of data to detect cases of erythropoietin (EPO) blood doping
- Eg. In 2012, Goal-line technology was approved by the International Football Association Board. It was used in the 2014 World Cup and helped award a goal to France against Honduras.
- Eg. Video Assistant Referee System introduced officially in 2018.

## 2. Sports and Categorisation via Sex/Gender

2024 Imam Khatt

Sporting competition has traditionally been sex-segregated along the binary 'male/female' distinction. With increasing awareness and challenges to this prevailing understanding of gender binaries, questions of the category in which trans and intersex athletes should compete have arisen.

Case study: Lia Thomas is the first openly transexual to win America's top trophy in university sports when she swam to victory in the women's 500 yard (457 meter) freestyle race in the 2022 National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) first division swimming championship.

- She had been undergoing gender-affirming hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which involves taking supplements of estrogen or testosterone for 3 years, losing strength and an inch of her height.
- Some critics of Ms Thomas' participation claim that she has an unfair advantage and claimed that moving into the women's league has improved her overall position.
- Yet those comparisons may not be fair, because HRT appears to have changed Ms Thomas's capacity. She used to participate in long races in the men's category but has since switched to short distances for the women's category.

### Controversies about testosterone testing as a form of sex verification

Sports regulators have adopted a variety of approaches to sex verification, with the prevailing approach being **testosterone testing**. Transwomen and intersex women are not precluded from competing in women's sport, but need to have their testosterone level remain below a



threshold for a period prior to and continuously throughout the competition. Athletes whose hormone level is about the permitted threshold must undergo hormone treatment.

Criticism towards such a method:

- Highlight the unnecessary medication of healthy athletes and violation of the principle of beneficence in medical ethics.
- Underline how the identity of the athlete is undermined, as she cannot compete in a category she identifies with.
- Suggest that testosterone has not been proven to provide an advantage which is intolerably unfair. There is selective regulation as there are no attempts to regulate other biological and genetic variations which provide clear performance advantages (such as longer limbs and flexible joints).
  - But exceptional athletes can also be biologically unusual: Michael Phelps' long arms and intersex runner Caster Semanya

### ***Transgender athletes in competitive sports: how to balance inclusivity and fairness***

#### Pro inclusivity:

- Permitting transgender women and girl athletes to have unbridled participation in sports is one step we can take as a nation to signify the equality of every human being in pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.
- Excluding transgender athletes is a ruse designed to shield intentions to deny transgender persons their full humanity. It takes courage to walk in one's true self-identity.

#### Female sports with trans athletes defies logic

- Male bodies are inherently different from female bodies. Due to an infusion of testosterone at puberty, men become, on average, taller, stronger, faster, and heavier than women. They develop bigger hearts, lungs, hands, and skulls.
- Even when trans women modify their bodies via surgery or testosterone suppression, performance advantages persist. No such modifications make a person shorter or shrink their hearts, lungs, hands, or skulls.

#### Questioning assumptions: What really constitutes fairness and inclusivity? What is equal access in sports? Does it mean participating in traditional categories?

Alternatives to consider include instituting separate scoring systems, replacing the men's category with an open category that welcomes everyone regardless of gender identity, or creating new categories for transwomen.

We have:

- Made great progress in providing opportunities for people with disabilities
- Created new categories to accommodate older athletes. In masters swimming, athletes are divided by sex and age: 40-44, 45-49, and so on. U.S. Masters Swimming, which had been defining the oldest women's category as 95-and-over, added a category for 100-104-year-old women.



**"In sports, fairness means competing against people who share one's biological sex, age group, ability level, weight class, and/or other relevant physical characteristics. Inclusion means finding alternatives to accommodate everyone who wants to play. As a society, we have devised creative ways to include all sorts of people without disadvantaging others. Surely, we can do the same for and with transgender athletes."**

*Mariah Burton Nelson – Former professional athlete and Women's Sports Policy Working Group member*

### 3. Disability/Paralympic sport

First ethical question: What criteria should be used to classify disability athletes? Must the disability be permanent or could it be temporary? How impairing must the disability be? Would use of medication for therapeutic purposes be open to abuse and how should they be regulated?

Second ethical question: Should disabled athletes be allowed to compete in able-bodied sport?

- Eg. Oscar Pistorius was controversially allowed to compete in the 400m at the 2012 Olympic Games and 2012 Paralympic Games, using carbon-fibre prosthetic legs.
- Objectors state that such prosthetic legs conferred him with an unfair advantage and others have questioned whether these precluded him from 'running' in the traditional sense at all (Edwards, 2008).

### 4. Rise of Extreme Sports: Ethical and worth the risk?

Traditional dangerous sports include collision sports such as American football and rugby as well as combat sports like boxing and martial arts. Recently, some popular and quickly growing extreme sports are snowboarding, speed and freestyle skiing, surfing, skydiving, mountain climbing and wakeboarding. They have gained controversy due to the dangers they pose to the athletes and audiences:

- Eg. China has indefinitely banned extreme sports in the wake of the 2021 Gansu ultramarathon tragedy, which resulted in the deaths of 21 long-distance runners. Extreme weather hit the trail when many of the competitors were crossing a remote and treacherous part of the 100km mountain track. Accounts of the disaster hinted at poor contingency plans and communication with rescue authorities.
- Eg. On June 11, 1955, a racing car in Le Mans, France, went out of control and crashed into stands filled with spectators, killing 82 people. This disaster was the most catastrophic crash in motorsport history, and it prompted Mercedes-Benz to withdraw from motor racing until 1989.
- Eg. Cheerleading in Singapore came under scrutiny after the death of 19 year-old Lai Qing Xiang, when he hit his head after attempting a backflip. This prompted Ngee Ann Polytechnic to order its cheer squad to suspend training indefinitely.







## SPORTS IN SINGAPORE

### Recommended Readings

1. The Straits Times - Singapore wants successful sporting culture, not solely medals: Eric Chua
2. Channelnewsasia - Commentary: Are Singapore's efforts to be a sporting nation half-hearted?
3. Jom -Chom Reap Lear Cambodia, Bonjour Paris

## ESSAY QUESTIONS ON SPORTS

### ***Commercial aspect of sport***

Does sport merit the vast sums of money that are spent on it?	GCE 2010
Is sport too closely linked to money these days?	GCE 2002

### ***Political involvement in Sports***

'Staging major sporting events brings nothing but benefits to the host country.' Discuss.	GCE 2021
'Individuals achieve sporting success, not nations.' Discuss.	GCE 2020
'Hosting major sporting events creates more problems than benefits.' Do you agree?	GCE 2005
Considering the money involved, should developing countries be allowed to host major sporting events?	GCE 2016

### ***Integrity in Sports***

'Gambling on sport undermines its spirit and should be banned.' How realistic is this position?	GCE 2014
Evaluate the claim that sports personalities make good role models for young people.	GCE 2023

### ***General Questions on Sports***

To what extent is sporting achievement given adequate recognition in your society?	GCE 2018
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