

On Sporting Integrity

Abstract

It has become increasingly popular for sports fans, pundits, coaches and players to appeal to ideas of ‘sporting integrity’ when voicing their approval or disapproval of some aspect of the sporting world. My goal in this paper will be to examine whether there is any way to understand this idea in a way that both makes sense of the way in which it is used and presents a distinctly ‘sporting’ form of integrity. I will look at three recent high profile sporting incidents that caused sporting integrity to be called into question. I will then examine three different ways in which philosophers have sought to understand integrity and examine whether any of these accounts can provide us with a plausible account of sporting integrity. I will argue that such an account can be given and show how this helps us to understand the three cases.

Introduction

Integrity is the most fundamental value to sport. Without integrity competition is meaningless.¹

It has become increasingly popular for sports fans, journalists, coaches and players to appeal to ideas of ‘sporting integrity’ when voicing their approval or disapproval of some aspect of the sporting world. In recent years there appears to have been a marked increase in discussion surrounding sporting integrity. High profile cases of breakdowns in sporting integrity, such as that involving the cyclist Lance Armstrong, appear to have raised the profile of sporting integrity. Moreover, institutional safeguards for sporting integrity appear to be on the rise. In 2010 The International Centre for Sporting Security was established with the aim, “to improve security, safety

¹ (ICSS 2014).

and integrity in sport.² Meanwhile, INTERPOL has launched its own ‘Integrity in Sport’ programme.³

It is far from clear, however, that there is a shared understanding of what this term means. As Cleret et al. point out, “there is still a lack of clarity and convergence as to its meaning and the scope of its application.”⁴ Is it supposed to refer to a distinct *sporting* form of integrity? Does it refer to one kind of integrity or are there different forms of sporting integrity? Even if we had answers to these questions we would not have a full answer to what ‘sporting integrity’ is, as philosophers disagree on how ‘integrity’ itself should be understood. In this paper I will examine how we should understand the nature of sporting integrity.

The discussion will proceed as follows, I will start, in §1, by explaining what we should look for in an account of sporting integrity. I will then, in §2, explore a range of different options that are available to those seeking to give an account of sporting integrity. I will then, in §3, look at three examples where sporting integrity has been said either to be threatened or to break down. I will then, in §4 and §5, use lessons drawn from these examples to provide an account of sporting integrity and explain why it is preferable to the alternative options. I will finish by examining and responding to an objection that could be raised against this argument.

1. Three Desiderata

² (ICSS 2010)

³ (INTERPOL 2014)

⁴ (2015 p.2)

In this section I will explain three desiderata that a plausible account of sporting integrity should satisfy.

First, a definition of sporting integrity that is roughly in line with ordinary usage is to be preferred to one that is not. While this is a defeasible consideration we should prefer an account that does not attribute error to ordinary speakers over one that does. I will call this point: *Respect Ordinary Use*.⁵

Second, a plausible account of integrity should provide us with resources for explaining the importance that people place on maintaining sporting integrity. This point is related to the previous one. As we have seen already and will see again in Section 3, sporting integrity is frequently claimed to be a fundamental value for sport. An account that is able to do justice to this thought is, all else being equal, preferable to one that is not. I will call this point: *Justify Importance*.

Finally, an acceptable definition of ‘sporting integrity’ will be one that fits with how the term is used in non-sporting contexts. It would, after all, be surprising if there were no relation between the way in which integrity is used in sporting contexts and the way it is used in other contexts. At the very least, any account that is unable to show how the term fits with other uses of the term should be capable of offering a good

⁵ We might worry that given that sporting integrity is a relatively new term that we should not put too much weight on respecting ordinary use. However, even though this term is relatively new I think that, *all else being equal*, we should still prefer an account that respects ordinary use to one that does not. After all, what we are trying to do in giving an analysis of this phrase is to try to provide a fuller understanding of a phrase that appears in non-philosophical sporting discussions. Of course, this is just one desideratum and there are other desiderata that should also play an important role in deciding between competing accounts of sporting integrity. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

explanation as to why the meaning of ‘sporting integrity’ does not fit with how the word ‘integrity’ is used in other contexts. I will call this point: *Explain the Connection*.

2. The Options

Before I investigate how to apply the concept of integrity to sport it is worth considering what, in general, is meant by ‘integrity’. The term ‘integrity’ stems from the Latin adjective ‘integer’, which means ‘wholeness’ or ‘completeness’. However, clearly this is far from a full account of what we mean by integrity. There are two key questions we must answer in order to provide a full account of sporting integrity. First we must say who it is that possesses sporting integrity. Then we must say what sporting integrity is.⁶ In this section I will provide a brief overview of the literature on integrity in order to look at a range of different ways in which we could understand sporting integrity. I will then draw on these different accounts in Sections 4 and 5 when I investigate what the most plausible account of sporting integrity is.

The majority of philosophers working on the concept of integrity are interested in integrity as a personal moral virtue. There are three different types of account that have been proposed. The first is the view of integrity as coherence. On this view integrity is a relation of coherence between different parts of a person. To possess integrity is to possess an undivided and coherent self. One version of this view is

⁶ We might worry that we cannot answer the first question without already having an answer to the second. There is some truth in this worry. We certainly could not give a conclusive answer to the first question if we had no idea how to answer the second. However, I think we can ask the first question as a way of starting to think about an answer to the second. However, this initial inquiry is going to be tentative, if our account of the possessor of sporting integrity leaves us unable to provide a plausible account of what sporting integrity consists of, then this will give us reason to reconsider our account of the possessor of sporting integrity. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

defended by John Bigelow and Robert Pargetter.⁷ They define integrity as strength of will. This, in turn is defined as the ability to ensure our first-order desires (ordinary desires such as the desire to eat a snack) are in conformity with our second-order desires (desires regarding our own desires such as a desire to not desire a snack). To have integrity on this account is to have the capacity to exercise strength of will in a sufficiently wide range of situations.⁸ Another popular view of is that of integrity as practical identity. On this view integrity is understood in terms of possessing a character that is founded on identity-conferring commitments.⁹ For example, a committed pacifist whose identity is intimately bound up with this commitment and who stays true to it can be said to possess integrity. A third view of integrity is as a social view.¹⁰ On this view integrity involves standing for something in front of one's fellow deliberators. A person with integrity is someone willing to stand by her best judgement in the face of social pressure. All three accounts might be supplemented in various ways. Lynne Mcfall argues that to possess integrity an agent's beliefs must be reasonable.¹¹ Likewise, Elizabeth Ashford argues that an agent can only possess integrity if her commitments are objectively correct.¹²

One answer that could be given to the question of who possesses sporting integrity is that sporting integrity is a personal virtue possessed by those involved in sport. I will call this option 'Sporting Integrity as Personal Integrity'. Of course if it is decided that sporting integrity is a personal virtue then this will only be the first step towards giving

⁷ (2007)

⁸ For objections to the coherence account of integrity see Calhoun (1995) and McFall (1987).

⁹ This view of integrity is defended by Williams (1973; 1981).

¹⁰ Versions of this view of integrity are defended by Calhoun (1995) and Scherkoske (2013).

¹¹ (1987 p. 11).

¹² (2000 p. 424).

an account. Such an account would also have to provide an answer to the question of what sporting integrity is.¹³

Integrity is also claimed to be a virtue that can be possessed by institutions. Ronald Dworkin has claimed that in addition to the commonly accepted political values of fairness and justice, political institutions should also possess integrity. This value applied to political institutions:

Requires government to speak with one voice, to act in a principled and coherent manner toward all its citizens, to extend to everyone the same substantive standards of justice or fairness it uses for some.¹⁴

Dworkin takes personal integrity to involve acting in line with convictions that inform and shape ones life. Similarly, political integrity involves a state acting in line with a coherent set of principles.¹⁵ This value creates two demands on political institutions. First, those creating new laws should seek to do so in a way that keeps the set of laws coherent. Second, those enforcing the law should treat the law as “expressing and respecting a coherent set of principles.”¹⁶

Another option then for those investigating the nature of sporting integrity is that sporting integrity is a virtue of sporting institutions. I will call this account ‘Sporting Integrity as Institutional Integrity’. This account would have to provide an answer to

¹³ We might think that it is particularly incumbent on such a view to provide an explanation of the relationship between sporting integrity and other sporting virtues such as sportsmanship. For a discussion of the concept of sportsmanship see Abad (2010) and Feezell (1986).

¹⁴ (1986 p.165).

¹⁵ (1986 p.166).

¹⁶ (1986 p.217).

the second question of what sporting integrity is. At this stage of laying out all of the available options it seems reasonable to think that the three ways in which personal integrity is accounted for could also provide three ways in which we could explain the nature of institutional integrity.

While these two sets of options leave open a range of further choices, it could also be thought that they provide an exhaustive range of the possible possessors of sporting integrity. However, interesting work on the notion of the epistemic integrity of the scientific research process points towards a further option. In De Winter and Kosolovsky's work on scientific integrity, for example, they give an account of what it is for a research process, rather than the people or institutions conducting that research, to have epistemic integrity.¹⁷ It is also worth noting that ordinary usage of the term is applied far more widely than simply to people or institutions. It is also applied, for example, to buildings, novels and ecosystems.¹⁸ For our purposes the lesson to take from this is that we should be open-minded in our search for the relevant possessor of sporting integrity. But if it isn't sports people or sporting institutions that possess sporting integrity then what could it be? One answer is that it is *the sport itself* that possesses integrity. I will call this account 'Sporting Integrity as a Virtue of Sport'. This account must also provide answers to the question of what sporting integrity is and again at this stage it seems reasonable to work on the assumption that the three possible ways of account for personal integrity can provide three options here as well.

In this section I have presented three answers to each of the two questions about sporting integrity. The following chart summarizes the range of possible options

¹⁷ (2013)

¹⁸ Miller (2013: 1) makes this point.

	Personal Virtue	Institutional Virtue	Virtue of Sports
Coherence Account	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Practical Identity Account	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Social View	Option 7	Option 8	Option 9

As we can see there are nine possible options here. Before deciding which of these offers the best account of sporting integrity I must examine how this phrase is used. It is this task to which I will now turn.

3. Breakdowns of Sporting Integrity

Sporting integrity appears to be a value that is rarely commented upon unless it is seen to be absent. In order then to get a clear idea of what we might mean by the phrase we should look to cases where people have claim that sporting integrity has been damaged. In this section I will present three cases where sporting integrity has been said to break down.

A. Lance Armstrong

In January 2013 the seven-times winner of cycling's Tour-de-France admitted to the use of performance enhancing drugs in each of these victories, a claim he had denied for years. According to the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), the US Postal Service Procycling team, of which Armstrong was the most prominent member, "ran the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program

that sport has ever seen.”¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, this event led to a public backlash against Armstrong and many saw this as evidence that he lacked personal integrity.²⁰ More interestingly for my purposes, though, is the claim made by some commentators that Armstrong had not only damaged his own integrity but also that of the sport. For example, Dan Jones of The London Evening Standard commented that Armstrong had left cycling, “with about as much basic sporting integrity as the WWE.”²¹

B. Olympic Badminton

In the 2012 London Olympic Games, four Badminton women’s double pairs were disqualified for attempting to deliberately lose a match in order to improve their medal prospects. The Badminton World Federation (BWF) took the decision to disqualify the pairs because they were guilty of “not using one’s best efforts to win,” and “conducting oneself in a manner that is clearly abusive or detrimental to the sport”.²² As a result of this decision, the BWF were praised for their “courageous decision to protect its sport’s integrity,”²³ and awarded The ICSS-Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University Trophy for ‘Outstanding Achievement in Promoting Sport Integrity’ by The International Center for Sport Security.²⁴

C. Glasgow Rangers

¹⁹ USADA (2012).

²⁰ Eg. Munro (2013).

²¹ Jones (2012).

²² Badminton World Federation (2013).

²³ Badminton World Federation (2013).

²⁴ Badminton World Federation (2013).

In 2012, the company owning Glasgow Rangers Football Club were placed into liquidation and ceased to exist. In their place, a new club, called The Rangers Football Club, was established and applied to join the Scottish leagues.²⁵ Historical precedent suggested that the new club should have to reapply to enter Scottish football in the bottom division. No previous application from a new version of a recently defunct club had been successful.²⁶ As the club imploded the other members of the league began to realize that the loss of one of Scotland's best-supported clubs from the top league would have negative financial consequences. In light of these concerns the proposal was floated that Rangers should be allowed both to avoid having to go through a formal application process to re-enter the leagues and to avoid having to start in the bottom division. Many journalists, chairmen and supporters of other clubs criticized these proposals for undermining sporting integrity. In fact, some supporters felt so strongly about this issue that they threatened to boycott clubs that voted in favour of the proposals.²⁷ The Chairman of Raith Rovers Football Club Turnbull Hutton called for the creation of a new governing body, "based on sporting integrity".²⁸

In this section I have presented three cases where sporting integrity is alleged to have broken down. In the next section we will investigate what these cases tell us about the concept of sporting integrity. Before I begin my argument however, it is worth noting

²⁵ It has been suggested by an anonymous referee that the sporting punishment Rangers received could be deemed to threaten sporting integrity. Importantly though, Rangers did not lose their place in the league as a *punishment* but rather as a result of the company ceasing to exist. The issue of integrity arose when the new club applied to join the league and it was suggested that they should be given special treatment. Thanks to an anonymous referee for helpful discussion here.

²⁶ A similar previous attempt had been made after the demise of Gretna Football Club.

²⁷ Keevins (2012).

²⁸ Halliday (2012).

that these three cases present further support for the claim I made in the introduction that any acceptable account of sporting integrity should seek to show why it is treated as something of great importance. In the Lance Armstrong case, for example, the sporting body was keen to point out that they had done their best to maintain the integrity of sport. Similarly, in the badminton case the International Centre For Sporting Security heralded the actions by the BWF to punish the pairs who had deliberately thrown the match. Again this makes sporting integrity look like something of significant importance to those with an interest in sport. Likewise, the threat by supporters of Scottish Premier League Football teams to boycott matches involving clubs who voted in a way they judged to be incompatible with sporting integrity shows how important the issue of sporting integrity is to followers of sport. Clearly, then, sporting integrity is taken to be of great importance by those involved with sport.

4. Sporting Integrity as a Virtue of Sports

Having looked at three cases where sporting integrity has been called into question I am now in a position to assess how best to understand sporting integrity. In Section Two I presented three broad options for sporting integrity. Sporting integrity can either be understood as a virtue possessed by people involved in sport, by sporting institutions or as a virtue of the sport itself. In this section I will argue that it is the last option, Sporting Integrity as a Virtue of Sports, that is the best account of how to understand sporting integrity.

Let's now turn our attention to which of the three accounts of the possessors of sporting integrity laid out in Section One best fits the way in which the phrase is used in the case studies.

I shall start by considering Sporting Integrity as Personal Integrity. This view does not fit well with all of the ways in which the phrase is used in these three cases. This account is most successful in the first case where it seems reasonable to think that Armstrong compromised his own integrity. However, this does not seem to exhaust the ways in which integrity was used in this case, as it was also claimed that Armstrong had damaged the integrity of *the sport*. In the Olympic Badminton case while the individuals involved were the subject of personal criticism²⁹, part of this personal criticism was that they had threatened the integrity of *the sport*. Again, in the Rangers case, although individuals connected to Rangers were the subjects of media criticism, their actions were taken to be a threat not only to their own integrity but also to that of *the sport*.

Sporting Integrity as Institutional Integrity does little better here. At least in the majority of these cases, this does not seem to be a plausible interpretation. While in the Lance Armstrong case we might well doubt the integrity of the USADA, we could accept the USADA's claim that they did their best to protect the integrity of the sport

²⁹ As an anonymous referee has pointed out, it isn't clear that the actions of the individuals was objectionable here. After all, given the set-up of the competition this might be viewed as an ingenious strategy for maximizing the chances of success. Importantly, my view is compatible both with the view that the players are blameworthy and that they are not. We could see the problem as arising only from the structure of the competition in which case the players would be blameless. Alternatively we could see the problem, as having arisen from a combination of the way the tournament was set-up and the attitudes of the players. Either way, the problem is that these actions undermined the integrity of *the sport*.

and nevertheless think that sporting integrity has been damaged in some way. The Olympic Badminton case is even clearer, at least some observers thought that The BWF acted with a level of integrity deserving of an award, yet that the actions of the double teams was damaging to the integrity of the sport. Perhaps, in The Rangers case it is possible to interpret the criticism as being levelled against the sport's governing body. We might think that the possibility that Rangers might be treated differently to other clubs undermines the claim that the governing bodies are acting in line with Dworkin's requirement those enforcing the law should treat the law as "expressing and respecting a coherent set of principles."³⁰ However, this does not seem to capture all of the ways in which sporting integrity was seen to be threatened. It doesn't, for example, seem easy to reconcile with Hutton's claim that a new organization needs to be "based on sporting integrity, as this suggests that this is a value the institution needs to protect rather than possess.

Rather, the claim in all three cases seems to be that it is the integrity of *the sport* that is damaged. In the Armstrong case Dan Jones claimed that the sport had been left with similar levels of integrity as WWE. In the Badminton case the governing bodies were praised for protecting the integrity of the sport from the double pairs. In the Rangers case there was a call for a new governing body to be based on sporting integrity. All this suggests that the possessor of sporting integrity, if it is present, is the sport itself. In order to satisfy *Respect Ordinary Use* it looks like we are committed to giving an account of integrity as a virtue of sports. The nine options we examined in Section Two can, then, be reduced to three.

³⁰ (1986 p.217).

We might worry that understanding the possessor of sporting integrity as the sport rather than the sportsperson or institution leaves us unable to question the actions of individuals or institutions in these cases. This, though, is not the case. This account of the possessor of sporting integrity allows us to criticise the individuals and institutions in these cases *for damaging the integrity of the sport*.³¹ My claim then, is not that the individuals or institutions are blameless in these three cases but rather that viewing the possessor of sporting integrity as the sport itself allows us to better understand why these actions were problematic.

5. A Coherence Account of Sporting Integrity

If we accept that sporting integrity is a virtue of sports then we must now answer the second question of what sporting integrity is. In Section Two I claimed that the different accounts of integrity as a moral virtue can be grouped into coherence accounts, practical identity accounts and social accounts. I will start by considering whether any of these three forms of moral integrity provide a helpful starting point.

A. The Social View

The first option to set to one side is the idea that integrity is a social virtue that amounts to standing by one's commitments in front of one's peers. There are two problems with this approach. First, it is far from clear what it could mean for a sport to stand by its commitments. It doesn't seem like a sport is the kind of thing that is capable of standing for something. Second, it isn't clear how we could understand

³¹ We might also want to question the *moral* integrity of the individuals and institutions in these cases.

what people, institutions or practices could count as a sport's peers. It seems hard to see how any coherent and persuasive response could be given to these questions and for that reason, I will set this option to one side.

B. The Practical Identity View

It is tempting at this stage to think that the practical identity account will fare no better. After all, what could it be for a sport, as distinct from a sportsperson or a sporting institution, to have a practical identity? A sport is not the kind of thing that acts so we might think that this account will fare no better than the previous one. This, though, would be too quick. An interesting version of this view is suggested by an Oxford Research report into integrity in sport. The report suggests the following account of integrity: "Threats to the integrity of sport occur if the people involved in or related to sports do not behave in accordance with the values of sport.³² On this view sporting integrity is a matter of those involved in sport staying true to the principles upon which sport is based. The report then suggests that the principles are those of 'Fair Play', 'Comradeship, Team Effort and Hard Work' and 'Promoting Health'.³³

³² (2010 p.6).

³³ (2010 p.6). It is worth noting that we could not make a similar move to construct a plausible social virtue view of integrity. Key to this form of the practical identity view is that the identity conferring commitments are held by the sport and sportspeople and institutions perform the 'staying true' to these commitments. This avoids the objection that a sport is incapable of acting while making sense of the claim that it is the sport that possesses the integrity. A social virtue view is unable to utilize a similar approach. The reason for this is that on this view it is important that someone stand by her own commitments in front of other deliberators and a sport is unable to perform the act of 'staying true'. Conversely, if sports people and institutions stay true to their own commitments then it is they and not the sport that would be the possessors of integrity.

This definition certainly does well in satisfying *Explain the Connection*. As I showed in Section Two, one of the approaches to defining moral integrity is to do so in terms of staying true to a practical identity. This account of sporting integrity is similar; in both accounts possessing integrity is a matter of staying true to identity conferring commitments. There is a clear connection then, between this account of sporting integrity and other ways in which the word ‘integrity’ is used.

However, there are two ways in which this definition might be challenged. We might challenge the claim that when sports men and women act in a way that is contrary to these individual values they damage the integrity of the sport. Alternatively we might seek to deny that sporting integrity is a matter of staying true to any sporting principles.

I will start by raising the first kind of challenge. First, consider the value of ‘Promoting Health’. There are, at least, two problems with claiming that sporting integrity involves staying true to this value. First, if this were a necessary part of sporting integrity then it should be expected that people will criticize sports stars or institutions that act in ways that are contrary to this value as damaging sporting integrity.

However, this does not seem to be what happens. For example, while there was widespread public disapproval in the UK when it was announced that companies such as Cadburys, McDonalds and Coca-Cola that promote unhealthy food and drink products would sponsor the 2012 Olympics. The decision to allow these companies to sponsor the games was criticized by the editors of *The Lancet* as “marring the healthy

vision of the games.”³⁴ However, despite this criticism this decision was not seen as one that brought the integrity of the sport into question.

Moreover, there are some sports that do not involve a clear link to the promotion of health, even amongst the participants. Many, for example, class Formula One and Darts as sports yet neither seems to promote the health of the participants. Of course, we could simply say that if they are sports then they are not sports with any integrity. Again, though, if this were the case then we should expect people to criticize these sports as lacking integrity and again this does not seem to happen. At least in respect to this value, then, this account fails to satisfy *Respect Ordinary Use*.

In addition it seems hard to see why a sports person or institution that fails to respect this value should render the competition meaningless. While, it is reasonable to criticize a violation of this value, doing so appears to be perfectly compatible with continuing to take the competition seriously. This means that this account also fails to satisfy *Justify Importance*.

The values of ‘Comradeship, Team Effort and Hard Work’ are also problematic, as there seem to be cases of sports stars who lack these traits without damaging the sport’s integrity. Take comradeship and team effort. While it might be true that these are essential values for many sports the case is less clear for individual sports such as sprinting, tennis (singles) or the high jump. Of course, a modern athlete would not get very far without working alongside a committed team of coaches and support staff.

³⁴ (2012).

However, it seems unlikely that people would think that if a world champion sprinter were to possess none of these virtues then this would damage the integrity of the sport. Nor is hard work a sporting virtue that appears relevant to integrity. While it is true that sports stars who work hard to earn their achievements are often admired, it is also the case that sometimes sportsmen and women are admired for possessing seemingly effortless talents. What is remarkable about watching Usain Bolt sprinting or Zinedine Zidane play a sixty-yard pass is that they make it look as if this ability comes naturally. Of course, it could be that what we are admiring is the hard work required to achieve such a high level of skill that these tasks can be executed effortlessly. However, this doesn't seem quite right. We would still marvel at these talents even if we found out that Bolt and Zidane never do any training. Perhaps we would find these talents even more marvellous if this were the case. Certainly, it would seem odd to think of this as undermining the integrity of sprinting or football. Respect for this value seems no more likely to satisfy *Respect Ordinary Use* than 'Promoting Health'. Nor does it seem any more likely to satisfy *Justify Importance*. While the values of Comradeship, Team Effort and Hard Work all seem to be worthy of respect there is little reason to think that a failure of participants to adhere to these values would render a sporting competition meaningless.

The final value, fair play, does appear to be better placed to satisfy both of these desiderata. The report claims that fair play involves following rules, everyone competing under the same conditions and having an equal opportunity to win.³⁵ All three case studies are plausibly seen as failures of fairness. Armstrong didn't follow the rules, while the badminton doubles teams gave some of their opponents a greater

³⁵ (2010 p.6).

chance of winning than others. Finally, the possibility of Glasgow Rangers being given special treatment is a clear case of the authorities giving one team more of a chance to be successful than other teams. Moreover, there also seems good reason to think that this value is important. A competition that gives one team an unfair advantage over another might well be thought of as meaningless.

Nevertheless there are problems with this account. The first problem is that it doesn't seem as if what matters for sporting integrity is whether someone or some institution acts in an unfair way but whether they are able to get away with it. If Lance Armstrong had failed a drugs test on the very first race in which he took the banned substances then it is unlikely that anyone would have complained about damages to sporting integrity. More generally, people break rules in sport all the time; that is why there are fouls, red cards, sin bins and suspensions. This only becomes an issue for sporting integrity when people are able to break rules and get away with it. If this account of sporting integrity were an accurate reflection of ordinary use then we would expect people to raise the issue of sporting integrity whenever sports people act in a way that is unfair. Given that this is not the case we can conclude that this account does not satisfy *Respect Ordinary Use*.

Moreover, on further inspection this view does not give a satisfactory account of the importance of sporting integrity either. While it is right to worry about a sport where people are able to get away with breaking the rules there seems little reason to worry about a sport where people sometimes break the rules. Imagine a competition in which competitors frequently break the rules but are always caught and given the appropriate punishment. This competition does seem to be one it would be

reasonable to be interested in. Much more so, certainly, than a competition in which rule violations are rare but never punished. If this is right then it seems as if the kind of problem that might make competition meaningless is not when those involved act in an unfair way but when unfairness goes unpunished. In this respect, then, this account does not satisfy *Justify Importance*.

So far I have claimed that it does not seem plausible to think that sporting integrity is a matter of those involved in sport or sporting institutions staying true to any of the three values offered by The Oxford Research Report. Of course, someone sympathetic to this approach to defining sporting integrity might respond by offering alternative values to take the place of these three. However, there are two problems with this. First, it seems likely that if any values are to be identity conferring for sport then it would be these three. It is hard to see then what alternative values a supporter of this approach could offer in place of these three. More importantly, though, is that it just does not seem right to say that unless a sport is committed to some fundamental values it is not worth watching. At the very least the supporter of this account owes us an explanation as to why we should take sporting integrity so seriously on this account. To be fair to the writers of the report, they seem to place less stress on this aspect of sporting integrity, saying only that if a sport loses its integrity it “might lose its appeal.”³⁶ Nevertheless, I take it that there is good reason by this stage in the discussion to want an account of sporting integrity to do more than show this level of importance. Ideally, an account should explain why competition would be meaningless in its absence.

³⁶ (2010 p.6).

C. The Coherence View

This leaves us with one other option, a coherence account of sporting integrity. In the rest of this section I will present an account of sporting integrity as coherence that satisfies all of the desiderata that I have claimed should be looked for in an account of sporting integrity.

The starting point of my account will be to look at what sport is. The orthodox answer amongst philosophers of sport is the answer offered by Bernard Suits' in *The Grasshopper* (2005). Suits claims that sports are a subclass of games that involve physical skill, exertion, prowess etc. Suits defines playing a game in the following way:

To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [prelusory goal], using only means permitted by rules [lusory means], where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means [constitutive rules], and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude].³⁷

For example, when I play football I have a pre-game goal (score more goals than the opposition) and we accept constraints on how we can achieve this goal (the rules of football). These constraints make achieving the goal harder than it otherwise would be and I accept them because they make the game of football possible.

³⁷ (2005 pp.54-55).

This definition of sport points towards a plausible coherence account of sporting integrity. If sport involves achieving a specific state of affairs through the use of less efficient means then it seems plausible to think that a coherent sport will be one in which the contestants face the same constraints in the means they can use to achieve this state of affairs. My account of sporting integrity, then, is as follows:

Coherence Account of Sporting Integrity: A sport has integrity to the extent that the constraints that the competitors face in the means they can use to achieve a given end are coherent.

This account of sporting integrity fits with the way it was used in our three case studies.

This is most obvious in the Armstrong case, where the US cycling team faced a very different set of inefficiencies to those faced by the other teams, as their riders were taking performance-enhancing drugs. This problem with this incoherence can be clearly seen from the Suitsian account of sport, as one of the rules that constitute the sport of cycling is that competitors may not take certain performance enhancing drugs. In this case then, the constraints faced by some competitors did not cohere with the constraints facing other riders. In breaking these rules, the US cycling team created a situation in which the constraints facing other contestants did not cohere with the constraints they were facing.³⁸

³⁸ An interesting related question concerns whether those who break the rules of a sport can be said to be playing the sport. For a discussion of this issue see Fezell (1988) and Suits (2005 p. 59).

In response to this diagnosis of the Armstrong it could be argued that other riders were also taking performance-enhancing drugs and so there was coherence in the constraints each faced.³⁹ However, if we accept this claim then another form of incoherence emerges. Namely, an incoherence between the constraints the athletes claim to accept and those they actually accept. This Suitsian analysis of games seems unable able to explain the problem with this incoherence. After all, from the point of view of the competitors we might think that it does not matter what constraints people claim to face, so long as each the constraints they actually face are the same. However, from the point of view of the spectators this lack of coherence is important. Spectators want to be in a position to evaluate the various performances of the competitors. An important source of pleasure in watching sport is in analyzing the performances of the various competitors. One way of accounting for this important part of spectatorship is given by Stephen Mumford. He claims that sport is a “contest of virtue,” that, “allows us to learn about and understand morality better.”⁴⁰ Clearly if we accept this view then evaluating the performances of the competitors will be important in order to properly identify the virtues being displayed. Even if we don’t accept Mumford’s view though, one need only listen to the debates that take place in sport sections of newspapers and sports phone-in radio shows to see that evaluating the performances of the competitors is an important part of sport spectatorship. The importance of this element of spectatorship shows the problem that would arise from an incoherence between the constraints the athletes claim to accept and those they actually accept. In such a situation spectators would be unable to accurately evaluate the performances of athletes, as they would not know what constraints the athletes

³⁹ Thanks to John William Devine for raising this issue.

⁴⁰ (2012 p. 98).

face. This shows that a lack of coherence between Suitsian constitutive rules is only one of the ways in which a sport might be incoherent and lack integrity.

The Coherence Account also allows us to see what was problematic in the Rangers case. Allowing Rangers to start out in the top league would have led to one team facing a different set of constraints to other teams. Unlike with the Armstrong case, this would not have been an incoherence in constitutive rules (the rules that create and define the sport of cycling) but an incoherence in the regulative rules (the rules that regulate the existing sport).⁴¹ There is still though, an incoherence in the constraints that different competitors would face, as while other teams would have had to win several leagues to earn the right to compete in the top league, Rangers would not have done. The Coherence Account then, allows us to explain why this case was seen as a threat to sporting integrity.

We might think that The Coherence Account will be less effective in handling The Olympic Badminton Case, as there are no rules (constitutive or regulative) that can be said to provide greater constraints to one team than another in this case. However, this account can explain why this should count as a breach of sporting integrity, as the coherence of the constraints facing different opponents can be threatened even when no rules are being broken. In this case the opponents of the pairs that were deliberately trying to lose their matches were facing very different constraints to pairs who were playing opponents trying to win their matches. The competition then, is not one in which competitors face a coherent set of constraints. The Coherence Account

⁴¹ The distinction between these two kinds of rule comes from Searle (1969 p.33).

is able to explain why all three of the cases we have looked at are breaches of sporting integrity. This shows that it does a good job of satisfying *Respect Ordinary Use*.

This account is also able to satisfy *Justify Importance*. A sport where one team faces far greater constraints than their opponents is of little interest. The reason why is that such a competition would both be unfair and would fail to determine winners on the basis of sporting ability. Who cares that Lance Armstrong managed to win the Tour De France while taking performance-enhancing drugs? This is not an interesting or worthwhile achievement. Similarly, there is little reason to care about how far a badminton team progresses through a tournament when it is doing so as a result of playing a team that are deliberately losing their games. Finally, there is no reason to be interested in the fact that a newly created football club have managed to reach the second tier of a national competition when they have not had to face the obstacles that other clubs would have had to face to get there. In all these cases these ‘victories’ fail to count as legitimate sporting achievements, as they were not gained as a result of winning a competition in which competitors faced a coherent set of constraints.

Finally, this account also satisfies *Explain the Connection*. Firstly because coherence is often seen as offering a plausible account of personal or institutional integrity and so this account is extending these approaches to sporting integrity. Secondly, because this account is true to the etymology of the term. A coherence account of integrity is one where the inefficiencies that one competitor faces in order to make sporting competition possible apply to all of the other competitors. This then is a case of these inefficiencies ranging across the complete range of competitors. None of the

competitors are excluded from these constraints; they apply to the whole range of competitors.

6. Objection and Response

One objection that might be raised against my argument is that it rests on a flawed methodology.⁴² I have been interested in investigating how sporting integrity by looking at three of the highest profile case where sporting integrity has been called into question. It could be claimed though that this leaves open the possibility that in other situations the phrase is used to refer to different concepts, perhaps one possessed by individuals or institutions. If this is the case then it might be thought that I have failed to provide an adequate defence of the claim that sporting integrity must be understood in the way I present.

It is worth pointing out that at worst this objection requires a weakening of the claim I have been defending. If this objection is right then instead of saying that The Coherence Account of Sporting Integrity as A Virtue of Sports is the most plausible way to understand sporting integrity I would only be entitled to say that it is the most plausible way to understand *one form* of sporting integrity. This is an interesting claim in itself but it is worth pointing out that as it stands there is no reason to retreat to this weaker claim. Of course it is possible that we use sporting integrity in other ways but until we are presented with a case where it is used to refer to a different concept then we have no reason to accept that there are a variety of forms of sporting integrity.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have argued first that sporting integrity should be viewed as a virtue possessed by sports rather than by sporting competitors or institutions. I then

⁴² Thanks to Eman Hurych for raising this objection.

defended a coherence view of this virtue. According to this view sporting integrity is a matter of coherence in the inefficiencies that people accept in order to make sporting competition possible. A sport in which people face very different constraints is one that lacks integrity. I argued that this view does a better job of satisfying the desiderata that a plausible view of sporting integrity should satisfy.

Before I finish it is worth mentioning an interesting consequence that this account has for those concerned with protect sporting integrity. According to this account of sporting integrity, sporting integrity is not a virtue possessed by either sporting competitors or sporting institutions. This suggests that the task of upholding sporting integrity may not be the sole responsibility of either the competitors or the institutions. Rather it may be up to both competitors and institutions to ensure that the integrity of sport is preserved. A full defence of this view, however, must wait for another day.⁴³

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⁴³ Thanks to audiences at The 3rd Czech Philosophy of Sport Conference at Charles University Prague, The 2015 British Philosophy of Sport Association Annual Conference at The University of Sunderland and The 2015 International Association for The Philosophy of Sport Annual Conference at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Special thanks to Jim Parry for lengthy discussion and to an anonymous referee for detailed comments on an early draft of this paper.

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