

contemporary world issues



# MODERN SPORTS ETHICS

*Angela Lumpkin*



# **MODERN SPORTS ETHICS**

A Reference Handbook

Angela Lumpkin

**CONTEMPORARY  
WORLD ISSUES**

A B C  C L I O

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# Preface

**E**xamples of unethical conduct in amateur sport are reported nonstop by the electronic and print media. These ethical issues are associated with an overemphasis on winning and commercialism that have taken amateur sport away from the ideals of playing sports for the inherent joy and personal satisfaction of challenging oneself against a respected opponent or a performance standard. Cheating to gain unfair advantages, gamesmanship ploys, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, recruiting scandals, academic misconduct associated with athletes, discriminatory practices against females and African Americans, and other breaches of principled behavior have become everyday realities in sports. Many fans, who want to be entertained as they cheer their favorite teams, have come to accept questionably ethical actions as normative behavior and the way the game should be played to help secure the all-important victory.

For well over a century, millions in the United States have claimed that youth, interscholastic, intercollegiate, and Olympic sports teach positive values. Yet, many people argue that sport ethics is a contradictory combination of words, or an oxymoron. If ethical conduct is to characterize sports, coaches, players, administrators, parents, and fans need to teach, model, and reinforce character development and positive values. To address ethical challenges like taunting, disrespect for opponents and officials, and cheating, this handbook on sport ethics emphasizes sportsmanship, respect for the game, fair play, and making morally reasoned decisions as essential to ensuring that positive values and character will be taught, learned, and demonstrated.

Chapter 1 includes a historical context for examining sport ethics, specifically how character development and sports are

linked. A description of ethics, ethical theories, and moral reasoning helps the reader gain a deeper understanding of the interface between amateur sport, ethical conduct, and morality in sports. Achieving positive values through sport programs sponsored by educational institutions is challenged by unethical behaviors. Numerous examples of violence, gamesmanship, violations of academic eligibility rules, sport dropout due to physical and psychological burnout, cheating, gambling, and the use of performance-enhancing drugs demonstrate the adverse effects of unethical behaviors in sports. Specific suggestions are described to show how character education can reduce unethical actions in sports.

Chapter 2 examines contemporary issues, controversies, and problems that confront all levels of amateur sports in the United States. This chapter stresses that an overemphasis on winning is a leading culprit contributing to unethical actions in sports. Cheating, gamesmanship, violence, discrimination, and the use of performance-enhancing drugs are examined topically. Then, specific ethical problems that threaten the achievement of positive outcomes in youth, interscholastic, and intercollegiate sports are presented. Recommendations for teaching positive values to youth, adolescent, and young adult athletes are offered.

Chapter 3 transcends national boundaries by placing sport ethics in an international context. The Olympic Games are described historically with an emphasis on these controversies: amateurism; nationalism and politics; racism and human rights; sexism and discrimination against females; bidding scandals; unethical behavior of officials; and use of performance-enhancing drugs and doping scandals. Examples of gamesmanship, cheating, gambling, and fixing outcomes of competitions show how unprincipled behaviors have become commonplace in international sports. Given the global interconnectedness of sport, codes of ethics have been enacted to guide athletes, coaches, officials, and fans in acting in morally appropriate ways, essential if sport is to achieve the lofty goals of friendship, respect, and fair competition.

Chapter 4 provides the reader with a chronology of significant events starting with the beginning of the modern Olympic Games to the present that have impacted ethical conduct in sports. More than 50 examples chronicle the erosion of positive values; a dozen examples applaud the highest levels of principled behaviors.



All of these examples are provided chronologically to contextualize unethical actions in sport. This chapter describes several awards and recognitions given by national sport associations to honor outstanding sportsmanship.

Chapter 5 personalizes this examination of sport ethics by providing 35 biographical sketches of athletes, coaches, and leaders whose ethical conduct in sport has been outstanding. Each profile shows how teaching and modeling positive values has made a difference in the lives of those who have been influenced to demonstrate positive values in sports.

Chapter 6 includes 4 documents, 12 figures, and 15 tables that provide evidence of existing ethical problems as well as positive approaches for addressing them. These data and documents provide key facts or statistics to help understand important ethical issues in sports. These data-based entries are placed into historical context. The reader is challenged to draw morally reasoned conclusions about ethical issues in sports based on the facts and evidence presented.

Chapter 7 describes 125 sport and sport-related organizations, which are placed into brief historical context. Web sites and contact information are provided for each organization, along with the connection of national sport governing bodies in the United States to international sport federations. As appropriate, each description connects the organization's scope of work with ethical behavior in sport.

Chapter 8 provides 175 citations of reference works, books, magazine and journal articles, other print works, DVDs, videotapes, databases, and Internet sites, each with an annotation describing its relationship to sport ethics. These print and non-print resources are the best available for learning more about and staying current with the latest challenges to ethical morality in sports and possible ways to recapture the moral fabric of amateur sports.

The glossary provides brief definitions of over 70 key terms associated with ethical conduct in sports.

## **Acknowledgments**

Parents are the first teachers who begin the process of developing and modeling moral values for their children. I would like

to express my deepest appreciation to my parents, Carol and Janice Lumpkin, who taught me what was morally right and helped me learn an ethical code of behavior that has shaped who I am as a person. I dedicate this book to honor them in appreciation for their guidance and love.

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