



# SPORT & INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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## *Preface*

The immediate origins of this book lie in an earlier study of the policy process for sport in Britain. As I explored the policy process for issues such as drug abuse by athletes and football spectator violence I became acutely aware of the extent to which influences on sports policy lay outside the control of national governmental and non-governmental organisations. The longer-term origins of this study lie in a course in 'Sport and World Politics' to which I have contributed for a number of years at Staffordshire University. This book is the outcome of the overlap of interest in sports policy and international politics.

As with all research I have accumulated a number of debts which I am happy to acknowledge. Iain Reddish, Head of the International Unit at the Sports Council, deserves first mention. Not only was he a stimulating source of ideas and information but he also gave me a long list of contacts in the world of international sport. Derek Casey, also at the Sports Council as Director of National Services, provided a number of sharp insights into the relationship of governments to sports organisations and particularly the role of the Council of Europe. George Walker, Head of the CDDS at the Council of Europe, was generous with his time and provided me with invaluable material on the work of the CDDS. John Tomlinson, MEP for Walsall and chair of the EC Intergroup on Sport, provided much useful information on the work of the Intergroup and much stimulating comment on the role of the EC in sports policy. David Dixon, Honorary Secretary to the Commonwealth Games Federation, provided many thoughtful insights into the operation and future of the Commonwealth Games. At the IAAF Jane Pearce and Brian Wootton were always willing to give me some of their time, even during

particularly hectic periods. I would also like to take this opportunity to record my thanks to Donald Macintosh, for giving me access to his forthcoming study of sport and Canadian foreign policy, and to David Jary for his comments on Chapter 8.

Finally, I would like to thank Kevin Ellard and his staff at Staffordshire University library who helped me track down a large number of elusive references.

## *List of abbreviations*

AAU	American Athletic Union
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific (States)
AENOC	Association of European National Olympic Committees
AIWF	Association of Winter Sports Federations
ANOC	Association of National Olympic Committees
ASOIF	Association of Summer Olympic International Federations
ATP	Association of Tennis Professionals
CCC	Council for Cultural Co-operation
CDDS	Committee for the Development of Sport
CGF	Commonwealth Games Federation
CHOG	Commonwealth Heads of Government
CIGEPS	Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport
CONI	National Olympic Committee of Italy
DLV	Deutscher Leichtathletik Verband (German Athletic Federation)
EC	European Community
ECU	European Currency Unit
ENGSO	European Non-governmental Sports Organisations
ESC	European Sports Conference
FIDE	International Chess Federation
FIDEPS	Fund Internationale pour le Développement du Education Physique et Sport
FIFA	International Federation of Football Associations
FINA	International Swimming Federation

FISU	International Federation of University Sport
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GAISF	General Association of International Sports Federations
GANEF0	Games of the New Emerging Forces
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trading
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IAAF	International Amateur Athletic Federation
IAAR	International Association of Athlete's Representatives
ICC	International Cricket Conference
ICSPE	International Council for Sport and Physical Education
ICSSPE	International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education
IF	International (Sports) Federation
IGO	International Governmental Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
(I)NGO	(International) Non-governmental organisation
IOA	International Olympic Academy
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ITF	International Tennis Federation
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MNC	Multi-national Corporation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NOC	National Olympic Committee
OCA	Olympic Council for Asia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASO	Pan American Sports Association
PE	Physical education
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAN-ROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SCSA	Supreme Council for Sport in Africa
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei (Communist Party of the GDR)
TAC	The Athletic Congress
TOP	The Olympic Programme
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USOC	United States Olympic Committee
WPBSA	World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association

*Note*

Acronyms derived from foreign languages have been given their conventional English expression where possible.



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# *Politics and sport*

It (sport) is always serious. It is organised: it is an industry; it is business, money, vested interests: it is a medium of and for ideology, prestige, status, nationalism, internationalism, diplomacy and war. (Tatz 1986: 47)

Sport is a political process based on play, game, and posture. If the activity is not serious, neither can be the positions, political or otherwise, of the national players. (Kanin 1980: 3)

## **Introduction**

The 1972 Olympic Games were held in Munich, West Germany. For Lord Killanin, then one of the vice-presidents of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), holding the Games in Munich was significant for two reasons: first, because it took the Games 'to the place where Nazism festered' (1983: 89); and second, because it showed 'the world that its [West Germany's] youth could take part in wholesome sporting competitions and that Germany had risen from the ashes of war' (1983: 89). However, it was not just Lord Killanin who recognised the political opportunities that the Olympic Games provided. During the Games, on 5 September, eight Palestinian terrorists stormed into the Israeli living quarters in the Olympic village, killing one Israeli in the process and taking nine athletes and two of their bodyguards hostage. In return for the safe release of the hostages the terrorists demanded the release by the Israeli government of over 250 imprisoned Palestinians. The Israeli government refused to negotiate and stated that the safety of its athletes was the responsibility of the West German government. The West German

authorities decided to storm the building in which the athletes were being held. Together with a number of the terrorists all the Israelis died. The executive of the IOC resolved that after a one-day period of mourning the Games should continue.

The tragedy brought into sharp relief the extent to which sport and politics intertwine. The incident raised a number of questions about the relationship between sport and politics. The foremost question was whether the Olympic Games were merely a convenient arena for the action of the terrorists or whether sport and sporting events are preferable targets for political action. Put another way, were Israeli athletes attending the Games a more desirable target than Israeli businessmen attending a conference or Israeli musicians performing in a concert abroad? If we accept that sport provides an easily accessible platform for political exploitation then we need to explore why it has this distinction. Is it only because of the high media coverage that sporting events generate or is it something inherent in the nature of sport that makes it vulnerable to political manipulation? A comment from a Palestinian terrorist suggests that the Olympic Games were chosen not only because they were a major international media event, but also because they were a sporting event. 'We recognise that sport is the religion of the western world . . . So we decided to use the Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us' (quoted in Killanin 1983: 98). Finally, we may ask whether the Olympic Games are more vulnerable than other major sporting events such as the soccer World Cup. Wren-Lewis and Clarke argue that the World Cup has been 'able to resist too great a politicisation' (1983: 124), even in 1982 when four of the qualifying countries were at war over the Falkland Islands.<sup>1</sup>

The Munich incident raised a number of important questions about the relationship between sport and politics, and an examination of two other occasions when they have overlapped will help to add to and refine the main themes of this study. In the early 1970s the Canadian government decided to inject a substantial amount of public money into sport. The decision came after a series of poor performances by Canadian athletes during the 1960s and a growing realisation that Canada's sporting prowess was in decline. There then followed a rapid rise in the investment by the Canadian federal and provincial governments. For many Canadians the return on their government's investment was reflected in the steady increase in the number of medals won in major championships. The pinnacle of achievement was reached during the

Seoul Olympics in 1988 when Ben Johnson became the fastest man on Earth by breaking the world record for the 100m with a run of 9.79 seconds. Unfortunately for Johnson and for his fellow Canadians the euphoria was short-lived as his routine urine sample was tested positive for anabolic steroids.

The dramatic removal of Johnson's Olympic title was the result of a test conducted under the auspices of the IOC which was responsible for overseeing drug testing during the Games. However, the routine drug tests carried out at Olympic events are only one part of an extremely complex anti-doping policy aimed at eliminating drug abuse in sport. If the campaign is to be successful then random unannounced tests must also be carried out throughout the competitive season of the particular sport and also during the pre-season training period. Anabolic steroids, for example, are a group of drugs that are most effective as aids to a training programme rather than being of use on the day of a competition. In order to enforce an anti-doping policy sports organisations have to achieve a high level of cooperation between international sports federations (IFs) and domestic governing bodies of sport, and between sports organisations and governments.

The IOC has provided a powerful lead to other sports organisations, but it is the IFs that have to make the anti-doping policy work outside the period of the Olympic Games. The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), the IF for athletics and one of the most prominent anti-doping campaigners, operates its drugs policy through its domestic governing bodies in each member country and through the operation of a 'flying squad' of drug testers who travel to athletes' out-of-season training bases to carry out random tests. The evolution of the present anti-doping policy is the result of a series of international negotiations and agreements involving not just the IOC, a number of IFs and their respective domestic governing bodies, but also a range of international governmental organisations. For example, the Council of Europe began discussion of the development and harmonisation of anti-doping policy for sport in the late 1970s and produced, in 1989, a European Anti-Doping Convention which gave member states clear guidance on policy and implementation. A less formal international governmental forum for policy development is the European Sports Conference (ESC) whose membership is drawn largely from government departments responsible for sport or from government-sponsored agencies for sport, such as the British Sports Council. The ESC draws its membership from all European countries irrespective of politics and has played an important part,

through its Anti-doping Working Party, in harmonising policy between western and eastern Europe.

Among the most significant aspects of the present policy are the agreements between the IAAF and a large number of governments to waive, or at least speed, visa requirements to enable the 'flying squad' of testers to operate quickly and to retain an element of surprise. In addition, a number of countries have concluded reciprocal agreements so that each will carry out random, out-of-season tests on foreign athletes who may be training in their country.

The development of a policy at international level to combat drug abuse by athletes highlights the network of links that have developed between governments and international non-governmental organisations and also the significance of the latter in the process of negotiating policy on international issues. Transnational organisations, such as the IOC and the major IFs, have close links with governments and a range of international governmental organisations which combine to produce an extremely complex pattern of interaction on policy.

This brief outline of the development and implementation of anti-doping policy suggests a number of important questions about the role and significance of transnational sporting organisations. Among the most important are the extent to which the organisations involved constitute independent actors in the international policy process; the extent to which they provide arenas for states to pursue national interests; the resources they possess and how they deploy them; and their effectiveness in shaping policy. Although the IOC is the most prominent transnational sporting organisation, there are a number of other bodies, including the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), which have a potentially significant role in the fabric of international relations.

The third example of the relationship between sport and politics concerns the defection of Hu Na from the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the United States of America in July 1982 (see Pendleton 1986 for a more detailed account of the repercussions of Hu Na's defection). Hu Na, a national star within China and promising international tennis player, defected during a visit by a PRC tennis team to California. The visit by the team was part of the slow process of improving relations between the two countries. Sport has frequently been an element in the progress towards 'normal' relations between two previously hostile states. With regard to the relationship between the USA and the PRC, the dispatch of a table tennis team to the People's Republic by the Nixon administration in 1971 marked one of the first steps in the process of

*rapprochement*. Between 1971 and 1982 a broad range of largely cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries had taken place, reflecting the steady improvement in the relationship.

The defection of Hu Na threatened to jeopardise the progress made so painstakingly. Indeed, while the United States was still considering Hu Na's application for asylum nine cultural bilateral exchanges scheduled for 1983 were cancelled and the PRC withdrew from ten international sports events due to be held in the USA. The cancellations were accompanied by warnings from Beijing that the granting of asylum would constitute a 'grave political incident' (Pendleton 1986: 16). To compound matters the defection took place against a background of intense and highly sensitive negotiations between the two countries over a number of important issues, including trade relations and the transfer of high technology to the PRC. Given the delicacy of these particular issues and the Sino-American relationship in general it would not have been surprising if Hu Na's defection had precipitated a serious deterioration in relations. However, Sino-American relations were soured for only a relatively short period of time and within eighteen months discussions on cultural exchanges began; by 1984 these were once again increasing in number.

Hu Na's defection is interesting because, even though China was not a major sporting nation and Hu Na was not an established international athlete, her defection generated considerable diplomatic activity and seriously affected Sino-American relations, albeit for a relatively short time. Yet Hu Na was not an exception as defections by athletes are generally treated as politically significant by governments and by the media. The defection of a number of West German athletes, including Emil Reinicke and Wolfgang Rupe, to East Germany in the early 1950s was heralded as a significant political coup by the East Germans. The defection of fifty Hungarians at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics was greeted in the west as further evidence of the repressive rather than liberating motives for the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The defection, in 1976, of Viktor Korchnoi, the Soviet chess grandmaster, was also applauded in the west. His subsequent world championship match against the Soviet champion, Anatoly Karpov, proved a profound embarrassment for the Soviet Union. More recently the defection of the Romanian Olympic gymnast Nadia Comaneci gained as much if not more media coverage than the migration of the hundreds of Romanians who took advantage of Hungary's decision to open its border with Austria in November 1989.

Why are defections by sportsmen and women, such as Hu Na, perceived as significant by politicians and the media? Part of the answer, one

might suggest, lies in the symbolic value of the athlete and of sporting success. For many, or indeed most, countries athletes are seen as personifying certain characteristics of the state or the people that inhabit it. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the USSR and the PRC, for example, it was possible to find many comments by sports administrators and politicians which praised sporting success as reflecting and demonstrating the virtues of the socialist organisation of society. Yet it is not just the communist states that saw sportsmen and women as symbolising the characteristics of a particular state or race. Hitler used the 1936 Olympic Games to attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the 'aryan race' and, in a less sinister fashion, the Americans, Australians and Canadians have all elevated athletes to the status of national heroes. Given the status that many athletes are accorded it is not surprising that they have a considerable capacity to embarrass their governments.

### **Sport, policy and international politics**

The three episodes outlined above illustrate a number of the ways in which politics and sport intertwine and the variety of questions that such intertwining generates. The aim of this book is to examine these and other questions that arise from a study of sport and international politics. However, in order to explore the relationship between sport and international politics it is necessary to establish some agreement about the use of these terms. Definition is frequently a soul-destroying exercise as the more one attempts to capture the essence of meaning of a human activity, the more one becomes aware of the ambiguities and the compromises necessary to arrive at a plausible definition. However, it is important to establish a common language if political science investigation is to take place.

Coakley provides a comprehensive definition of sport as 'an institutionalised competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals whose participation is motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors' (1986: 17). Coakley is at pains to distinguish sport from recreation, play and spectacle. All attempts at definition have grey edges and it would be possible to idle away considerable time debating whether professional wrestling, chess, synchronised swimming and ice dancing qualified as sports. For our purposes Coakley's definition is sufficient to indicate the field of policy that is the concern of this book (see Edwards 1973: 57-8 and Allison 1986: 5 for other examples of definitions of sport).

Politics, and especially international politics, is equally difficult to define. For Millar politics is an activity that 'arises out of disagreement, and it is concerned with the use of government to resolve conflict in the direction of change or in the prevention of change' (1962: 16). The stimulus to political activity is therefore disagreement and conflict. Crick shares Millar's definition of politics as a process for resolving disputes. He refers to politics as 'the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated' (1964: 21). It might be argued with some justification that the definitions provided by Millar and Crick, while being valuable because of their precision, are rather too narrow. The emphasis is not just on recognised political institutions but also on what one might call 'high' politics involving political parties, governments, international governmental institutions, and major pressure groups.

A different emphasis is one that sees the defining characteristic of politics as the use of power at varying levels in international society. According to this view power is derived from the use or control of resources. Resources may be tangible such as money, military might, raw materials, and the location of a country, or they may be intangible such as moral authority (for example, of some religious groups and leaders such as the Pope, or of some countries such as Sweden and Switzerland) and political legitimacy (of an elected politician). These resources are sources of power to influence the choices of decision-makers. Decisions which affect our 'life chances' are not taken just by governments or supra-governmental organisations such as the European Community (EC), but may be taken by a wide range of organisations including the parochial (schools, the workplace and the family) or the international (multi-national corporations). For the athlete this range may, in addition, include local clubs, governing bodies of sport and international organising bodies. According to this definition politics is a ubiquitous phenomenon in our lives and cannot be seen as a separate activity. As Leftwich claims, 'politics is at the heart of *all* collective social activity, formal and informal, public and private, in *all* human groups, institutions and societies, not just some of them, and that it always has been and always will be' (1984: 63). According to this view politics is closely woven into the patterns of decision-making in a society, its ideologies and its distribution of power. It is proposed to adopt this broader definition of politics for the purposes of this study as it will enable an examination not just of the political relationship between governmental institutions and sport, but also of the internal politics of non-governmental institutions and sporting bodies themselves.

The utilisation of resources to generate power is stimulated by the desire to influence policy. However, policy is, like politics, open to a



number of differing definitions. The term may be used quite loosely to include what Hogwood refers to as 'policy as aspiration' (1987: 4) as well as more precisely to describe the 'deliberate choice of action or inaction' (Smith 1979: 13). But it is not just governments that can have policies: supra-national organisations; international sports federations; domestic governing bodies of sport, physical education bodies and individual clubs, for example, may all have policies which they seek to advance. A distinction may be made between public policy, which Dye (1975: 1) defines as 'whatever governments choose to do or not to do', and private policy, which refers to the policy procedures and objectives of non-governmental organisations. The basis of such a distinction is that states or supra-national institutions have a legitimacy based on control of the government or based on representative links with government. However, in practice such a distinction is frequently artificial and not an indicator of greater influence on policy matters. There are many instances where the terrorist organisation, the multi-national corporation or religious group has been able to mobilise greater resources on some issues than many governments or inter-governmental organisations.

### **Themes for discussion**

Armed with definitions of sport, politics and policy we can now return to the issues and questions raised in the first section of this chapter. In order to explore these and other issues and questions that arise from any examination of the relationship between sport and politics it is necessary to find some way of organising our discussion. While the questions of theory and conceptual language appropriate for the study of sport and international politics are presented in the next chapter the following discussion of the variety of ways in which sport and politics overlap will establish the major themes which recur throughout the book.

McIntosh notes that there are 'very few governments in the world which do not accept the political importance of success in international sport' (1963: 187). Yet, as will be demonstrated, governments intervene in sport policy for a wide variety of reasons: some are concerned to achieve objectives that are primarily internal, such as fostering the development of sport as a sector of the leisure industry, or to improve the nation's health. By contrast there are instances where a government's intention in intervening is directed at the achievement of foreign policy objectives, such as improving relations with other states. Unfortunately