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BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO FAIR-PLAY IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS^(*)

1. Introduction

In professional competitive sports, every player or team tries to be superior to the opponent, following a set of written rules which define how the game has to be played. These rules have been labelled as Constitutive rules, and are accepted by every player to play fairly the competition. Moreover, there are also a second type of rules labelled Normative rules that may differ across the different sports and reflect the values' system established by players, coaches, managers and fans. Some normative rules, such as kick the ball off to help a player on the ground in a soccer match, favour fair play. However, other normative rules imply intentional violations of constitutive rules to achieve some benefits for the team, such as, in soccer, to stop an opponent in the midfield, when he has the opportunity of creating a dangerous opening. These behaviours are called "useful" or "tactical" fouls, and some sport scientists have suggested that some of rule violating behaviours, including aggressive player behaviour, are normative behaviours perceived as legitimate by participants (e.g., Silva 1981, 1983; Vaz 1979). Consequently, socialisation process in sport will legitimate rule violating behaviour in professional and youth sports, unless sports leaders modify sport rules to state that rule violating behaviour will become dysfunctional to sport success. In this chapter, contact faults, behaviours against fair play, and behaviours in favour of fair play were assessed in 24 football matches of English Premiere League (PL) and the Spanish Liga de Futbol Profesional (LFP).

Studies about violence and aggression, specially violence between spectators of a professional contact sports like football, prevailed in the eighties in Sport Psychology and Sociology as a result of serious riots produced by football hooligans (Dunning, Murphy, & Williams, 1988; Goldstein, 1983; Murphy, Williams & Dunning, 1990; Rimé & Leyens, 1988; Smith, 1983). In fact, some authors like Russell (1993) suggested that outside wartime, sport is perhaps the only setting in which acts of interpersonal aggression are not only tolerated but enthusiastically applauded by large segments of society.

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