

AGGRESSIVENESS IN RUGBY

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ABSTRACT. In the present study we analyse the phenomenon of aggressiveness in rugby, of violence and aggressiveness in sport and we conclude with some suggestions. In rugby, aggressiveness and violence are permitted by regulations. They are considered to be educational and training purposes and they involve a fundamental contradiction: playing, fighting to the finish without becoming destructive. From an amateur sport rugby has become a professional one. It is not surprising that aggressiveness and violence are sometimes witnessed in rugby like in any sport. The suppression of violence, which stems from the environment, does not happen without influencing the environment. Perhaps today's society is the framework that supports sport. On the rugby pitch, battle is the art of producing aggressive energy. The key is to know how to use it. How spontaneous one should be? To what degree? How to play smart? Being a fighter in rugby means to harness aggressive energy only within the limits of regulations. Coaches, tutors, teachers, players and spectators should all be aware of these factors.

Key Words: rugby, aggressiveness, violence, fighting, destructive.

REZUMAT. Agresivitatea în jocul de rugby. Studiul care îl prezentăm, continuă acest obiectiv al analizei fenomenului, agresivitate în jocul de rugby, violența și agresivitatea în mediul sportiv, conducându-l la propuneri. În rugby, agresivitatea și violența este legalizată de regulamente fiind dorită în scop educativ și formativ, conținând o contradicție fundamentală: a juca, a lupta până la limita maximă, dar fără a atinge actul destructiv. Rugby-ul de la un joc de amatori actualmente a devenit un sport profesionist. Nu este surprinzător că asistăm uneori la agresivități și violențe ca și în celelalte sporturi. Suprimarea violenței, a cărui factori predispuși se află în mediu, nu are loc fără a atinge acest mediu. Sau aceasta este, în cele din urmă societatea de astăzi, este cadrul care sprijină sportul. În rugby lupta care se dă în teren este arta de a produce energia agresivă. Problema este de a ști cum să o utilizezi. Cu ce spontaneitate ? În ce limite ? În serviciul unui joc inteligent ? A fi luptător în rugby înseamnă să mobilizezi energia agresivă doar în cadrul regulamentar permis. Conștientizarea de către antrenori, preparatori, profesori și a jucătorilor de a câștiga, agresivitatea și ostilitatea publicului.

Cuvinte cheie: rugby, agresivitate, violență, luptător, destructive.

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Introduction

Is sport a destructive aggression generating activity?

“Th. Arnold admits that sport promotes redirection. Aggressive energy generally derives from the relationship between the individual and the environment and the destructive aggression results, according to Freud's theory of the unmet need, from the unsatisfied need of this relationship (individual-environment).”(Conquet P., *Les Fundamentaus dex rugby*, p. 132, Edition Vigot)

Sport can produce destructive aggression only when the individual becomes frustrated. Or by its very nature, sport unleashes energy even when one is frustrated. Energy may thus be redirected outwards or inwards as part of an activity and it leads to the pursued objective.

Sport does not generate destructive aggression and the individual should not be denied a vital necessity. Individuals cannot stop the production and the release of aggressive and destructive energy unless they channel it into an activity.

However, we admit that sport generates destructive intropunitive aggression. A typical example of this kind is the individual alone who makes statements about his/her colleague. This aspect of domination should not be allowed to be satisfied unless it is felt as a last resort to the individual's need.

“Th. Arnold says: “Violence is the bitter fruit of human temptation to be aggressive.” In our view, this disposition may finally replace the bitter fruit with a sweet and pleasant one.” (Conquet P., *Les Fundamentaus dex rugby*, p. 132, Edition Vigot)

Interestingly, K. E. Moyer shows that aggressive behaviour originates in the amygdala (a gland located in the limbic system of the brain) and he emphasizes that an external specific stimulus (a qualitative aspect) is required for the individual to actively express aggression.

Fundamental Aspects

Problems concerning aggression in rugby

Rugby was born among British intellectuals in 1823 of a natural impulse to protest against the Puritan rigours and established order which were embodied by the rigid football referee who was himself the epitome of the harsh, powdered-haired judges, stern as pharaohs. It was born of “spleen” and of the need to break and renew the old-fashioned and absurd rules of a game played with “feet only”, thus being a youthful and normal impulse to catch the ball instead of backing off and hitting it.

Reviewing the aggression issues that are studied nowadays by biologists, psychologists, psycho-sociologists is of great interest: it is the first phase to be presented. But this is not enough. The sports activity is a specific autonomous activity, which induces particular behaviours. We are not interested only in all we can say about aggression. In sport, particularly in rugby, coaches and specialist teachers should show interest in this phenomenon. They should analyse and understand it. They should also study behaviours related to the activity and the environment surrounding it.

In what follows, we continue to analyse the phenomenon of aggression in rugby and we offer some suggestions.

The notions of violence and aggression in rugby

In sport as in life, the notion of violence exists only in relation to a given rule. While some practices are tolerated by societies, some are not.

If we consider different sports, we can make the following general remark: the regulations of all the sports involve violence.

For example, what is considered to be violent in football it is not violent in rugby (to catch, to tackle an opponent). What is considered to be violent in rugby is not violent in American football (to tackle an opponent who does not carry the ball).

Violence is not only a physically brutal act, it can also be verbal and some players are good at producing those events you do not see, but which are penalized by the referees.

Aggression and violence do not happen only in rugby. All sports are equally subject to acts of aggression (the everyday life as well), even if for many of us this is not dangerous. On the contrary, in rugby, violence has different effects that can be destructive because intentional contact is allowed by the rules of the game as long as it is painless.

In rugby, aggressiveness and violence are permitted by regulations. They are considered to be educational and training purposes and they involve a fundamental contradiction: playing, fighting to the finish without becoming destructive.

In our opinion, this feature of the game has positive effects because overload can lead to:

- rejection due to frustration, which in turn brings about a brutal reaction;
- loss of self-control and thus brutality.

In other combat sports excesses of aggression and violence are minimal in the presence of one or more referees. But in rugby, one person must control the action of 30 players.

The sports environment in rugby in relation to aggression and violence

In all the sports there are factors related to the environment and rugby is no exception. Sports leaders, coaches, supporters and sports journalists make up the player's immediate entourage. It is among these people that he/she usually lives and finds appropriate support in the sports act. Victory brings supporters to the social environment of the team. The impact on players is not always positive. Playing for pleasure and the desire to fight are replaced by the wish to win at all costs or to play to win something (high status, social advancement, national benefits).

Victory has become an imperative and defeat has grown more and more unbearable. From an amateur sport rugby has become a professional one and, similarly, the game from leisure has grown into a profession. It is not surprising that nowadays we witness shameful activities, which are unanimously criticized even though everybody shares the blame for them.

This explains why, in victory-driven environments, people have recourse to local, national or racial chauvinism (the situation of the national team of South Africa, "Sprinbock", under apartheid is a case in point). Such an approach focuses exclusively on the psychological preparation without taking into account the adversary (seen as an enemy) and it promotes violence.

In the psychological preparation one can notice the intention to increase the players' self-confidence, to minimize the devaluation of the opponents, to decrease the importance of the commando mentality. These must be replaced with the essential notion of struggle and the respect for the opponent. Consideration, knowledge, respect for the team and the human being in general could prevent rivalries. Access to these values should be suggested and the repressive measures envisaged should be considered as well.

Proposals

Youth rugby activity should be well organized so that there is little violence. A link should be established between rugby's fundamental contraindications, the need to be aggressive and the type of behaviour to adopt so that aggression never loses the sense of violence.

This pedagogical aspect should primarily draw the attention of those working in this field. They should use it in teaching (in and out of the game). Teachers' statements should be consistent with this principle. An important suggestion is to give special attention to the elements that influence relationships within the team and to similar behaviour by simple imitation.

The suppression of violence, which stems from the environment, does not happen without influencing the environment. Perhaps today's society is the framework that supports sport. The importance of the notion of playing for fun or for victory should be associated with the frustrations caused by defeat. This involves incurring criticism, disapproval, briefly, an individual or collective devaluation. As shown, the game is not mere play, but a serious business, and it means much more than a job. So what should be done so that the consequences of a defeat do not involve the social value of the individual or of the team?

The team staff must be able to bear defeat. There are always good reasons to win "at any cost". "Must win" and "have no right to lose" are expressions that show some people's inability to accept the consequences of defeat (there are moral and material reasons).

On the rugby pitch, battle is the art of producing aggressive energy. The key is to know how to use it. How spontaneous one should be? To what degree? How to play smart?

Being a fighter in rugby means to harness aggressive energy only within the limits of regulations. This also means that aggressive energy must not be allowed to reach a level of intensity that is harmful to the opponent's health.

Coaches, tutors, teachers, players and spectators should all be aware of these factors. The audience's yelling is an inappropriate act of aggression. Aggressiveness and hostility are unwarranted and unnecessary and the players have the right to express their contempt by showing indifference. They must make it clear that aggressive events are useless. The only way to prevent this is victory over the home team.

Rugby regulations are very lax because it is a game based on combative spirit and aggressiveness, which takes place within the limits of regulations. The relationship between the players and their attitude towards the referees are founded on respect.

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