# Use of Sport for Development and Peace: Critical Analysis

Sport has huge potential to impact social change. At its most basic, sport can significantly improve mental and physical health as well as teaching essential social skills and values. When harnessed properly, sport can easily have the power to unifying people, cultures and entire nations. The reason that sport plays such an important role in development and peace is because it holds a number of unique qualities that allow it to constructively contribute to the development and peace processes. These have been discussed by Right To Play (2008):

Universal popularity – transcending of national, cultural, socio-economic and political boundaries, when done right, sport is enjoyable for participants and spectators alike and can be invoked in virtually any community in the world.

Capacity as a powerful global communications platform – Because sport events offer the capacity to reach vast numbers of people, they are effective platforms for public education & social mobilisation.

Ability to connect – sport is an inherently social process bringing together players, teams, coaches, volunteers & spectators.

Cross-cutting nature – sport can be used to address a broad range of social and economic challenges.

Potential to empower, motivate and inspire – sport has the natural ability to draw on, develop, and showcase individual strengths and capacities.

In this essay, I will look into various different case studies, from global initiatives and objectives to peace programs and international competitions, in order to critically discuss the use of sport for development and peace.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals were eight goals that all 191 UN member states agreed to try to achieve by 2015. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, committed world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The MDGs were derived from this Declaration, and all had specific targets and indicators.

The Eight Millennium Development Goals were:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. Develop a global partnership for development. (WHO, 2000)

Sport represents a significant source of potential for enhancing and even accelerating the Millennium Development Goals. Sport's attributes make it a valuable component of broader, holistic approaches in reaching the eight MDG benchmarks. (Right To Play, 2008)

Firstly, sport can help to eradicate poverty and hunger as sport programs provide jobs, help the development of employability skills and it can help to increase an individual's self confidence and social skills which also lead to increased employability.

Sport is hugely important for achieving universal primary education as it can be so inspirational to children. School sport programs motivate children to attend school and it can also help improve academic achievement. Furthermore sport-based community education programs provide alternative education opportunities for children who cannot attend school. Sport can also help to end the stigma preventing disabled children from attending school.

When it comes to promoting gender equality and empowering women, sport helps improve female physical and mental health by offering opportunities for social interaction and friendship as well as also giving women access to leadership opportunities and experience which allow them to gain many vital qualities for later life.

Reducing child mortality is a huge challenge and it may not seem like sport can help it at all, however it can help reduce the rate of higher-risk adolescent pregnancies, moreover sport-based vaccination and prevention campaigns help reduce child deaths and disability from

measles, malaria and polio. Inclusive sport programs also help to lower the likelihood of infanticide by promoting greater acceptance of children with disabilities.

Sport for health programs offer girls and women greater access to reproductive health information and services and increased fitness levels help speed post-natal recovery which helps to achieve the fourth MDG of improving maternal health.

In regard to achieving the sixth goal, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, sport programs can be used to reduce stigma and increase social and economic integration of people living with HIV and AIDS. They are also associated with lower rates of health risk behaviour that contribute to HIV infection as well as providing HIV prevention education and empowerment can further reduce HIV infection rates.

In order to ensure environmental stability sport-based public education campaigns can raise awareness of importance of environmental protection and sustainability, furthermore sport-based social mobilisation initiatives can enhance participation in community action to improve local environment.

Finally, sport for development and peace efforts catalyse global partnerships and increase networking among governments, donors, NGOs and sport organizations worldwide, this greatly helps to develop a global partnership for development. (Right To Play, 2008)

Perhaps the most famous example of how effectively sport can be used for peace and development is the 1995 Rugby World Cup which was held in South Africa. For years rugby was seen as the symbol of apartheid in South Africa as it acted as a microcosm of South African society given that the game was almost exclusively a white man's sport with little to no black

players.

The Springboks had been excluded from the previous two world cups in 1987 and 1991 due to the international sporting boycott of South Africa during the apartheid era. This boycott spanned across decades and was not just limited to rugby. The country was suspended from FIFA in 1961. After a visit to the country by the English president of FIFA, Stanley Rous, the suspension was lifted, and South African football officials suggested they send an all-white team to the 1966 World Cup in England, and an all-black one to Mexico four years later. Not surprisingly, this idea was rejected, and the suspension was reimposed. (Mail & Guardian, 2007). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) withdrew its invitation to South Africa to the 1964 Summer Olympics when interior minister Jan de Klerk insisted the team would not be racially integrated. (Booth, 1998). In 1968, the IOC was prepared to readmit South Africa after assurances that its team would be multi-racial; but a threatened boycott by African nations and others foresaw this. The South African Games of 1969 and 1973 were intended to allow Olympic-level competition for South Africans against foreign athletes. South Africa was formally expelled from the IOC in 1970. (Mail & Guardian, 2007).

Nelson Mandela saw how valuable sport could be. As the country’s first ever black president he made a hugely bold statement telling black South Africans to get behind the Springboks and cheer them on, despite the team traditionally being hated by the black population. South Africa managed to defy the odds and defeat New Zealand in the final in Johannesburg. During the remarkable post-match presentation ceremony, Nelson Mandela presented the captain, Francois Pienaar, with the Webb Ellis Cup while wearing a Springbok jersey bearing Pienaar's own number 6. During his acceptance speech, Pienaar made it clear that the team had won the trophy not just for the 60,000 fans at Ellis Park, but also for all 43,000,000 South Africans. This was widely seen as a major step in the reconciliation of white and black South Africans; as F.W. de Klerk later put it, 'Mandela won the hearts of millions of white rugby fans.' (Wikipedia, 2019)

This event showed how incredibly constructive the use of sport for development and peace can be. It allowed a nation that was so fiercely divided to come together and unify over one common goal. Mandela knew how important the Springboks were to South Africa’s white population, shown by the response to the teams ban from prior international competitions. By harnessing something that was a symbol of oppression by the people that had labelled him as a terrorist and imprisoned him for 27 years, Mandela’s constant mantra of forgiveness was revered across the country, helping to foster cooperation and mutual reliance among former enemies. (UN, n.d.)

There have been some occasions where sport can actually provide respite in the midst of a conflict and provide an opportunity for aid and humanitarian relief for civilians during a war. The most famous example of this is the Olympic Truce. The Olympic Truce is a tradition originating from Ancient Greece that dates back to 776 BC. A truce was announced before and during the Olympic Games to ensure the host city state was not attacked and athletes and spectators could travel safely to the Games and peacefully return to their respective countries.

In 1992, the International Olympic Committee renewed this tradition by calling upon all nations to observe the Truce during the modern Games. The Truce was revived by United Nations Resolution 48/11 of 25 October 1993, as well by the United Nations Millennium Declaration relating to the world peace and security.

In 1994, the Bosnian War was raging on in what would turn out to be the deadliest conflict in European history since the end of the Second World War. During the 1994 Lillehammer Olympic Games, the truce meant that the conflict in Bosnia ceased long enough to permit the vaccination of 10,000 Bosnian children, which undoubtedly helped to save lives. Also during the games, the Second Sudanese Civil War was ongoing and thanks to the Olympic Truce a ceasefire between the Sudanese government and an armed opposition group was secured. REFERENCE The case studies show once again that sport can be have a hugely positive impact when used for development and peace, even going as far as preventing child illness and deaths on the battlefield.

Of course, it is important to discuss that sport can also have an extremely negative impact on peace and development. Sport is frequently used to promote nationalism, racism, and sometimes even terrorism. On the 5th to the 6th of September 1972, during the Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Palestinian terrorist group Black September took hostage of 11 Israeli Olympic team members. Black September demanded the release of 234 Palestinians that were jailed in Israel. The Israeli authorities gave a firm response stating that there would be absolutely no negotiation. As a result of this failure to comply, the terrorists killed the 6 coaches, 5 athletes and 1 West German police officer that they had taken hostage.

Black September focused on the Olympic Games for the attack as it offers a huge platform to spread ideologies, whether they be for good or evil. The terrorists were fighting for the human rights of Palestinians in Israel but were assisted by West German neo-Nazis (Latsch and Wiegrefe, 2012) and were associated with secular nationalism (Ciment, 2015, p.57). This case study shows that sport can be used as a tool for terror just as easily as it can be used for peace as it puts forward a large platform where, a lot of the time, the whole world can see so it offers a perfect stage to spread messages of hate.

One example of this is the 1936 Olympic Games, held in Berlin. The Games were seen by Adolf Hitler as an opportunity to promote his government and ideals of racial supremacy and antisemitism. The official Nazi party paper, the Völkischer Beobachter, wrote in the strongest terms that Jewish and black people should not be allowed to participate in the Games, this was then revoked after threat of boycott from other nations. However, German Jewish athletes were barred from taking part by any means possible despite many of them being world class talents and the best in their field.

The Games were used by Hitler as an enormous piece of propaganda to promote an image of a strong and powerful Germany as well as to camouflage its racist, militaristic character while hosting the Summer Olympics. Downplaying its antisemitic agenda and plans for territorial expansion, the regime exploited the Games to trick many foreign spectators and journalists with an image of a peaceful, tolerant Germany. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.)

Leni Riefenstahl, a popular German filmmaker of the time, was commissioned by the German Olympic Committee to cover the games and produce films over the course of the two-week event. She was hired for an enormous fee of $7 million as the Nazis understood the power of media propaganda and how important it was to them.

Germany skilfully promoted the Olympics with colourful posters and magazine spreads. Athletic imagery drew a link between Nazi Germany and ancient Greece, symbolizing the Nazi racial myth that a superior German civilization was the rightful heir of an 'Aryan' culture of classical

antiquity. This vision of classical antiquity emphasized ideal 'Aryan' racial types: heroic, blue-eyed blonds with finely chiselled features. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.)

The participation of 49 countries in the Games essentially legitimised Hitler's regime in the eyes of the rest of the world as he managed to portray Germany as a progressive state whilst covering the fact that they ran a regime which stood for the brutally violent abuse of human life.

In conclusion, sport is a great tool for development and peace as it has a unique power to inspire whole generations of people regardless of age, ethnicity or religion. It drives people to achieve, become better people, as well as empowering and motivating them to achieve good. It provides employment, huge physical and mental health benefits and most importantly can be harnessed to end conflicts and deliver peace. However, as discussed in the essay, sport also drives nationalism and discrimination and is often used as a vehicle for hate. In my opinion, I think when used effectively, sport can be temporarily beneficial for development and peace to an extent but on its own is not powerful enough to deliver genuine change for good, ensure peace or solve complex issues.

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