



Olympics Paris 2024 – D7 – Supporters & fair play spirit

The actors of theatre are unanimous: they play with their partners on stage but also with the public which constitutes a full actor that they must consider. If the audience is positive and constructive, they surpass themselves and give their best. If the spectators are hostile and refractory to their play or their characters, the gut is assured. In the 19th century, a dishonest strategy of some theatre directors was to pay a hostile “slap” to ruin a play (and its author) and the troupe that played it – whistles, spitting, shoving and rotten tomatoes were some of the “good practices”.

All high-level athletes have the same argument. When the spectators are transformed into enthusiastic supporters, they go above and beyond and can even perform wonders. They instantly get excited, even going for a bronze medal, the hardest one, because they had to swallow their disappointment of not having won gold. This ability to bounce back, and get back in the saddle, is worthy of the best champions. They do not let themselves be discouraged.

The French supporters at the Olympic Games in Paris astonish other spectators with their good spirit, their good-natured side, and their unconditional support for their champions. French swimmer Léon Marchand’s finals will be recorded – the room was breathing in the same breath as their champion when he won his first final (400 yards) then the next day chained without weakening two other finals (200 m butterfly and 200 m breaststroke). But the French public is not exclusive to its national celebrities, yet numerous at this XXXIII Olympiad. When the American champion Simone Biles wins her 6th title in the individual gymnastics competition, the public is equally enthusiastic. The spectators praised the performance and excellence of an extraordinary athlete. Nadia Comaneci, at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, had sparked such enthusiasm.

The spirit of fair play promoted by the sports movement, especially the most popular sports such as football consists in respecting the rules of its discipline, not to challenge the decisions of the referee, and in the stands denounce inappropriate behavior (insults and intimidation of other spectators or players). Making amends by acknowledging your wrongdoing is part of the spirit of fair play. The anti-game consists for the athletes to consider their opponents as enemies to be killed, and for the supporters to take the stadium for a wild war field, without any limits. Hooliganism is a phenomenon that has been the news in the 1980s and 1990s. Hooligans were running around the English stadiums, skinheads under a British government that was multiplying attacks and brutality against protesters (Welsh miners, hunger strikers in Northern Ireland, female pacifists against the installation of nuclear missiles). The more the political and social climate is disturbed, the more the seeds of hatred are unleashed, surfing on the lowest instincts of disoriented supporters, hard hit by the crisis, who are being manipulated. In France, the Boulogne tribune of the Parc des Princes was known for the outpourings of its ultras, just as hateful and violent as their British counterparts.

Sport is not war, which also has a code of honor and respect for elementary rules. Democracy is great when it respects the spirit of fair play.

- (1) Honoré de Balzac « Illusions perdues », Paris, 1843.
- (2) Wladimir Andreff, Jean-François Bourg, Bénédicte Halba, Jean-François Nys, « Les enjeux économiques du sport en Europe », rapport remis au Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, pour le Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg, 1994.
- (3) Commission européenne (2007) « Livre Blanc sur le sport » - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=DA>
- (4) Mickaël Gamrasni « Olympiques ! La France des Jeux », France, documentaire diffusé le 16 juillet 2024 sur France 2
- (5) Bénédicte Halba (1997) « Economie du sport », Paris : Economica
- (6) Bénédicte Halba (1999) « Dopage et sport », Toulouse : Milan
- (7) Site officiel du COJO-<https://olympics.com/fr/>
- (8) Jules et Gédéon Naudet « Au cœur des jeux », France , 2024- série documentaire diffusée sur France 2 (juillet 2024).

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