

Education through Organized Youth Sport

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How does sport contribute to adolescents' norms, values, and behavior?





Three educationally relevant contexts

- Home
- School
- Sports club
 - Approximately 70% of all Dutch and North American adolescents participate in organized youth sport (Breedveld & Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2006; NCYS, 2001)



Dutch politics

- Politicians value sport as a way of transferring norms and values, and promoting the integration of youngsters (from ethnic minorities) into society.
- The government has recently decided to offer sports clubs financial support. In return, sports clubs should take more (educational) responsibility and contribute more to the wellbeing of our society.



Sport as an educationally relevant practice

Neutral

- Sport cannot be defined as a specific educational context
- There are no specific norms and values intrinsic to sport

Sport as an educationally relevant practice

Negative

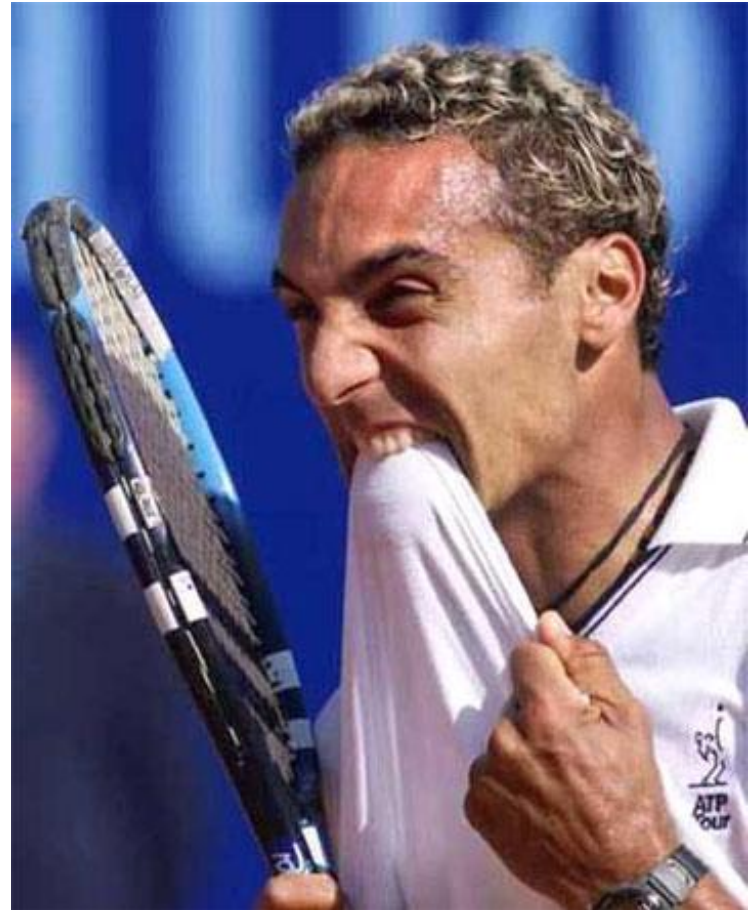
- Moral norms and values are disregarded (moral break, bracketed morality)
- Competition leads to antisocial and aggressive behavior



Sport as an educationally relevant practice

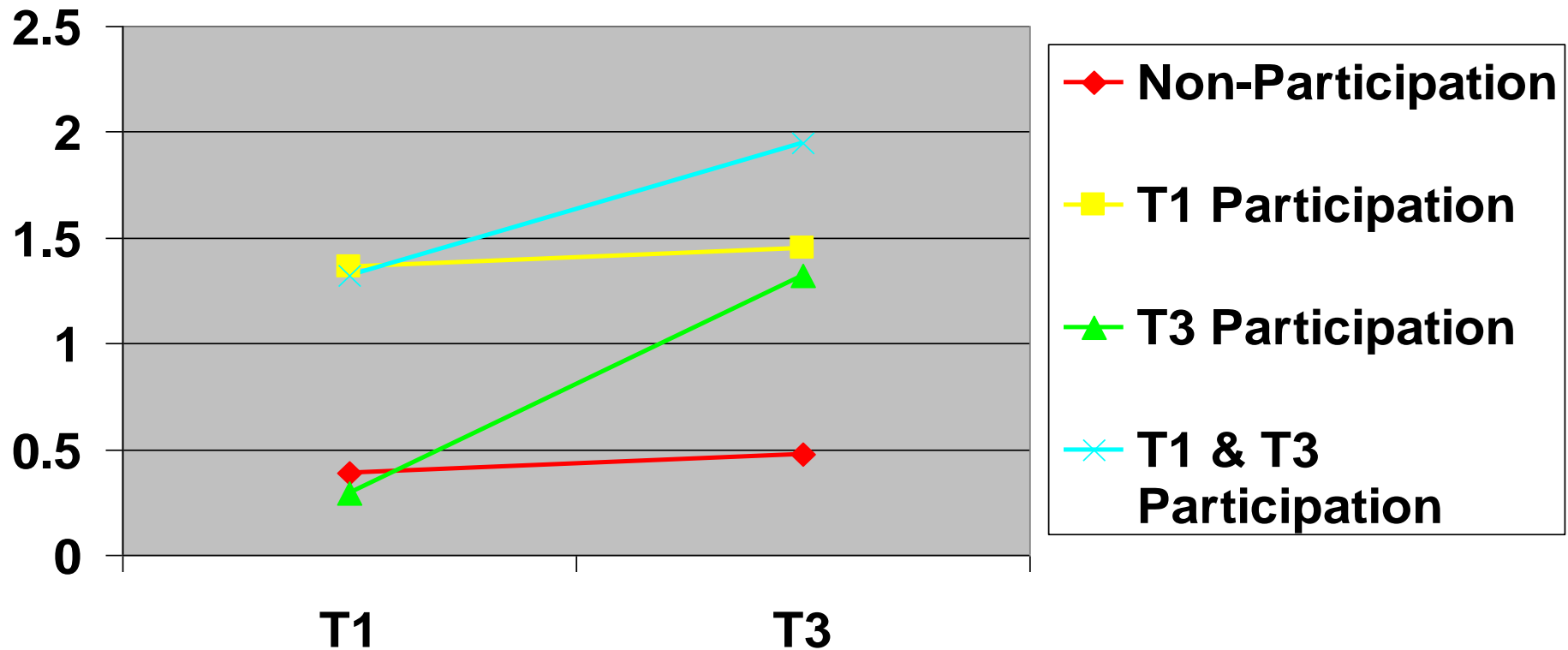
Positive

- Fair play
- Character building
- Social binding
- Social competence
- Valuable context: specific experiences and new opportunities



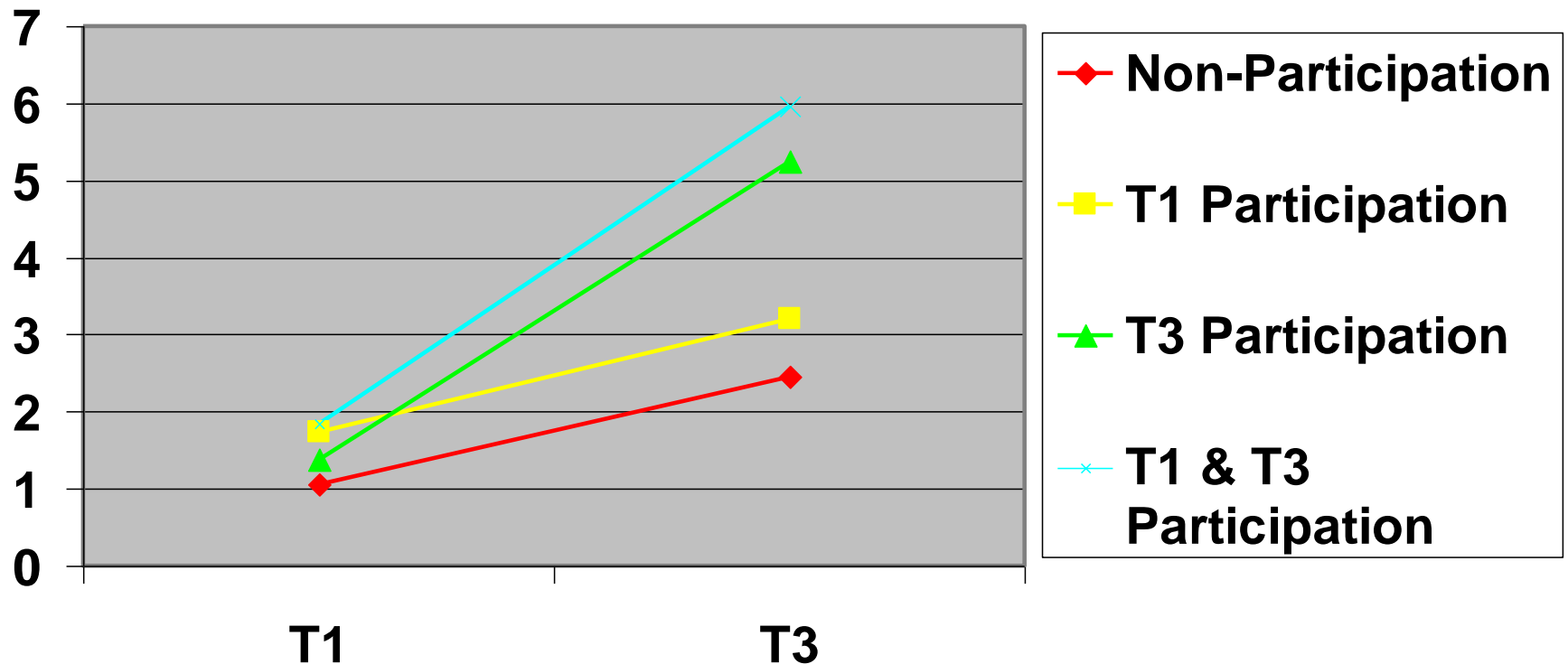
Power sport participation in boys, aged 11 to 13 yrs, at T1 and T3 (Endresen & Olweus, 2005)

Violence Scale



Power sport participation in boys, aged 11 to 13 yrs, at T1 and T3 (Endresen & Olweus, 2005)


Antisocial Scale





Power sport participation in boys, aged 11 to 13 yrs, at T1 and T3 (Endresen & Olweus, 2005)

- Adolescents participating in power sports showed more violence and antisocial behavior than peers who did not participate in (power) sports.
- Post hoc, the researchers found an explanation in the macho-culture in which the sports were performed.



Rutten (2007), in collaboration with Stams, Schuengel, Deković, Biesta, Dirks, Hoeksma, & Verweel

■ Quantitative study

In total 1030 youngsters from 54 sports clubs participated in our 4 studies, which were based on questionnaires, moral interviews, and a fair play interview

■ Qualitative depth study

Practical discussions at sports clubs: presentation of the quantitative research results



Behavior in general and in the sports context (on/off-field)

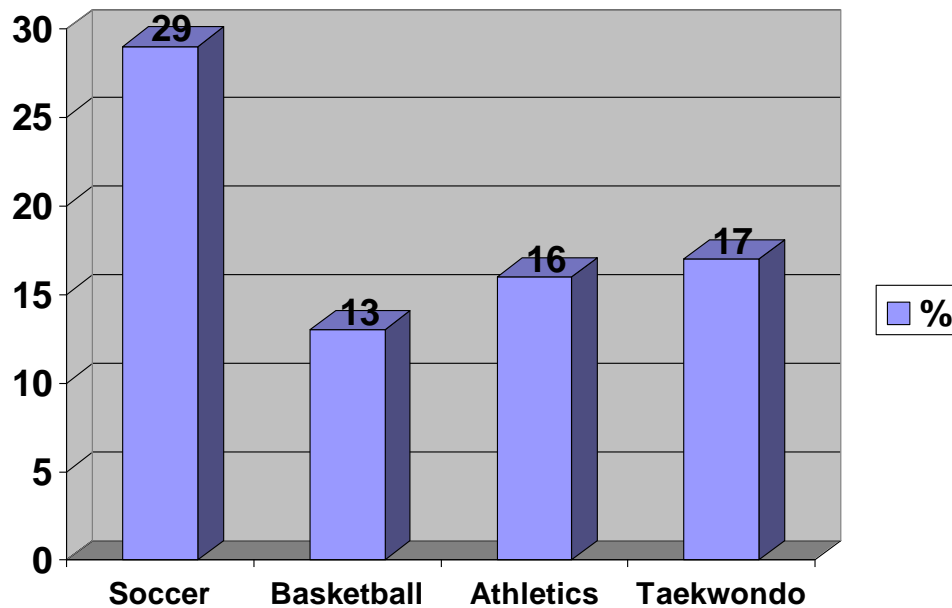
■ Antisocial

- I get yellow and red cards
- I have purposely destroyed or damaged other peoples' belongings at our club

■ Prosocial

- If another player does something very well, I pay him a compliment
- If there is an argument in the changing room, I try to do something about it


Aggressive and delinquent behavior in the clinical range (Rutten, Schuengel, et al. (2006))





Independent / explanatory factors

- Quality of the relationship with the coach
 - I can trust my coach
- Fair Play attitude
 - Winning is more important than sticking to the rules of the game
- Moral climate
 - At this club, the bystanders cheer on the athletes
- Practical moral reasoning in the sports context



Example

Moral reasoning about sport dilemmas

- Imagine: The score is 0-0 and you are playing the last minute of the most important match of the season. The forward of your team deliberately falls in the penalty area of the opponent. The referee gives a penalty and your team wins. How do you think about this way of winning? Give your opinion.



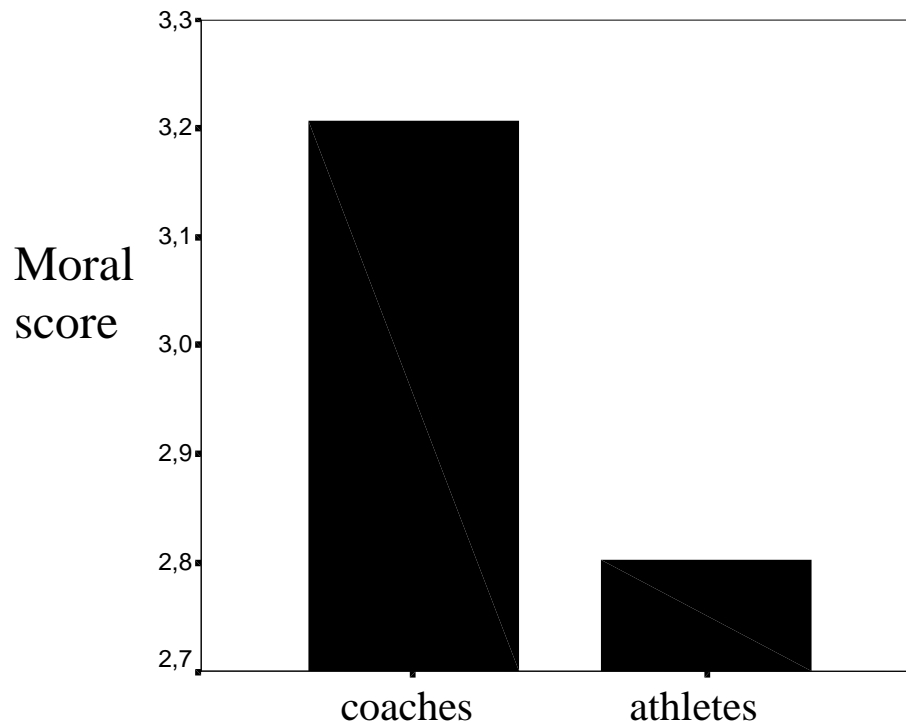


According to you, the best reason would be...

- A) It is not fair, but at least you will win the match
- B) You would not want to lose that way either
- C) The opponents will feel terrible to lose in such a way
- D) If you win in such a way, it is not worth participating in sports anymore

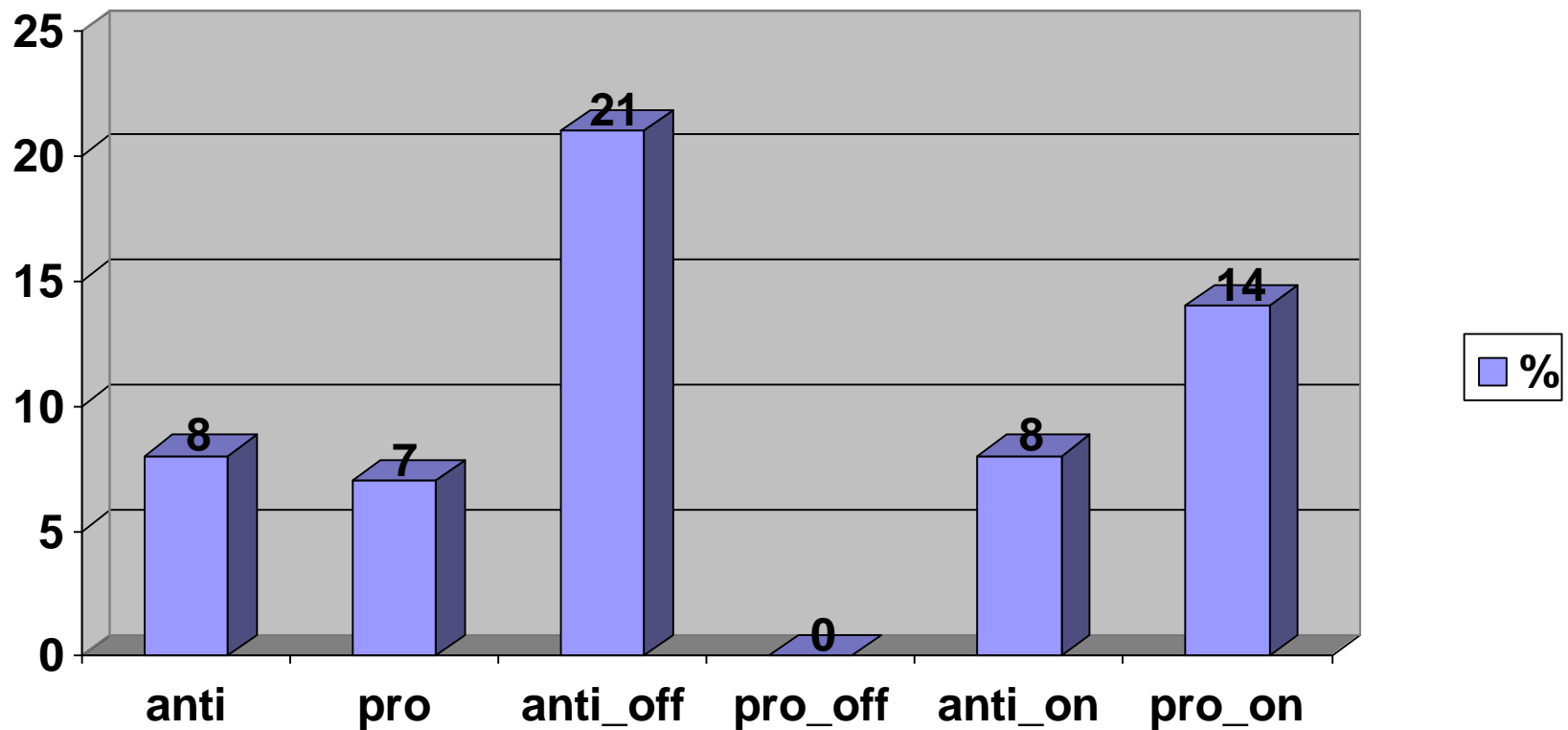
Moral reasoning about sport dilemmas


Coaches versus Athletes



Impact of sport (context) on behavior in general and on/off-field

(Rutten, Stams, et al., 2007; Rutten, Deković, et al., in press)





Results quantitative research, less anti- and more prosocial behavior through:

- More positive relationship with the coach
- Higher level of moral reasoning
 - Sport is more than winning or losing
 - Putting yourself in someone else's shoes is important
 - Putting self-interest and group-interest into perspective
- More positive moral club climate
- Stronger focus on fair play



Forum discussions on quantitative research results

- Relationship with the coach
- Moral reasoning
- Moral climate club
- Fair play
- Anti- and prosocial behavior

Moral reasoning

- A coach

"I like winning, but you must also accept, that if there is a less gifted player in your team, then you can start to grumble, and that is something we often talk about with the children, but you can also simply offer some help. We used to have a really poor goalie, but at a certain moment we told them that calling him names really doesn't help. We told them that it is their task to prevent the other team from scoring. So make sure that you have a good defense. Be a team. In those cases you're constantly talking to these boys, both as a parent and a coach. Norms and values. I prefer that they are a team and that they lose the game, than that they aren't a team and win it. Those norms are really important."

Moral climate

- Coach

"Don't start a fight, but talk to each other. If you can't solve the problem, there is always a supervisor or coach around. It is a simple fact that if, for example, when some of them stay around to chat a bit and someone joins them who is aggressive and wants to start a fight, that it's much more likely that he will adjust to the group than that the group will adjust to him."

Quality of the relationship with the coach (1)

- Swimming athlete

"I had a coach whom I didn't like that much. So, I didn't want to swim anymore. I didn't agree with what she said. I thought, I just let her bullshit, you see. I make up my own mind. You simply don't feel like doing it, you know, until you get a new coach. Then you start doing your best again.

I didn't put much effort in improving that relationship, because I didn't like her. In fact I never really spoke to her."

Quality of the relationship with the coach (2)

- Soccer coach

"You must get on quite well with these lads. You're also sort of an educator. You must know what you're talking about. If you don't know anything about soccer, then you will never deserve their respect. But the most important thing is that you get along well. The whole point is creating a good atmosphere. And you need to pick the right moment to talk to them about their conduct; when they go beyond their bounds. You really ask a lot of self-discipline and self-control of those boys, you know."

Quality of the relationship with the coach (3)

- Youth soccer coordinator

"It's for sure that you have an influence over those kids. There is always an element of education. They learn in all kind of different ways. For example on the pitch when they learn rules, another kind of discipline than at school or at home. Interaction. You must learn to function properly in a team, to be tolerant, to know that you're not the most important one. A coach always and inevitably has a role in that."

Antisocial behavior at a soccer club

- Athlete 1: If you are about to lose, and you get irritated, you can tackle someone, definitely.
- Athlete 2: The keeper was fooled around and then they went for a goal and then I reached for the ball with my hand, so what if they give a red card. That doesn't matter, as long as the opponent doesn't score. Then someone walks around and kicks you and then you think piss off! And then you walk back and kick him as well. It is not fair, but fair play simply doesn't exist.
- Father: Of course there are different degrees. You don't have to kick someone to death.

...at the same soccer club

- Mother: It just happens, it is instinct that takes over. I sometimes see my son tackle someone and then I think: YES! You know. That is just normal on a soccer field, it is a rough game. So, yes...
- Athlete 3: If somebody passes you again and again, then you just tackle him, you know. That's really wicked; you simply feel much better then. You lay one on him, and then he goes "oh, oh, oh", and he just doesn't dare to do anything anymore. That's so much better.
- Father: These kinds of violations are not allowed of course, but it is understandable. It is part of the game. You can count on it to happen.

...at the same soccer club

- Mother: Of course they should not start fighting on that soccer field, I absolutely disapprove of that. But you cannot avoid it. It is inherent to soccer.
- Athlete 1: "As soon as the match starts everyone changes. That's the whole point, you see. When the referee whistles, then you turn your bum. From that moment on you are enemies. Some really normal guys - a mate of mine from school, for example, who is in our team - they really get crazy. Totally aggressive, shouting, really out of their mind. Completely different. You start to think "Who is this guy?". But after the match, he was just normal again. Talked normal again, you know."

Not sport itself,
but the environment
in which sport is
performed,
is of overriding
importance!

