Cultivating sport citizens

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the potential role of citizenship in sport. The International Olympic Committee has displayed a limited commitment to democratic principles via the Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance. While top-down reforms may be necessary, the stakeholder groups (e.g. athletes) seeking more power also ought to be conceived of in the context of a more democratic system. The tendency to focus on democracy in relation to the governance of sport without efforts to educate sport stakeholders, especially athletes, has resulted in a system heavily reliant on institutional authorities to address concerns. By shifting attention toward the experience of athletes, a different view of the sport system comes into focus – one that centres the development and education of athletes. The aim of this work is to determine the most significant factors in the cultivation of citizenship, in addition to exploring the potential role of education in citizenship cultivation. A more comprehensive understanding of these aspects can serve as a foundation for how citizenship in sport can effectively be cultivated. I conclude by suggesting methods of education reform in sport, grounded in theories of education *for* sport, education *by* sport, and education *through* sport.

KEYWORDS

sport; good governance; democracy; citizenship

INTRODUCTION

Since the International Olympic Committee released its Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance (IOC, 2008) there has been a steady output of critical works focused on institutional reforms and top-down efforts (Frawley &Schulenkorf, 2017; Henne, 2015; Harris et al., 2021; Pielke, 2013; Thibault, 2021). While the IOC and other institutional actors can improve their approach to be more reflective of the good governance principles such as responsibility, transparency, accountability, and

democracy (Geeraert, 2021; Thompson et al., 2022), there are also developments to be made on the part of non-institutional stakeholders such as athletes. The relevance of democracy for the governance of sport is well established (Chappelet, 2018; Geeraert, 2021; Minikin, 2015; Parent, 2016; Thibault et al., 2010). However, less has been said about citizenship in sport.

The use of 'democracy' throughout this article refers to the concept in a more expansive way, not limiting democracy to political contexts. It will be argued that the international sport system is already democratic in some ways and subsequently makes a case for further democratisation to address prevalent issues in the sport system. The international sports system in question is an ideal of sorts. I acknowledge that sport is embedded in authoritarian contexts that do not seek to uphold democratic principles. This article seeks to address the Olympic sport system or international sport system at its best, in an ideal sense. The international sports system is already partially aligned with democratic principles via its commitment to good governance principles. However, democracy is an ideal, meaning that no system could be considered entirely democratic.

All systems seeking to embody democratic ideals are on a spectrum. This is not referring to a singular continuum or scale ranging from one point to another. Instead, democracy should be thought of as having multiple dimensions, each with its own continuum, measuring a variety of elements associated with democratic principles. Different institutions have different criteria regarding what constitutes democracy. As an example, the European Label of Governance Excellence lists 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance: participation, representation, and fair conduct of elections, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, openness and transparency of law, rule of law, ethical conduct, competency and capacity, innovation and openness to change, sustainability and long-term orientation, sound financial management, human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, and accountability (COE 2008). Each of these principles can be understood as a dimension of democracy with its own continuum. Each time improvements are made regarding any of the dimensions, the process of democratisation is occurring.

There is much work that international sporting bodies, such as the IOC, can do in support of the democratisation of the sports system, including incorporating stakeholders in the governance of sport. However, the work of non-institutional stakeholders is just as important, if not more important, than that of institutional stakeholders. A democratic system is reliant on both the institutions and the citizens for its well-being and sustainability (Dewey, [1916] 2001). The focus of democracy is on the procedures and infrastructure necessary for the system, while the focus of citizenship is on the experiences and behaviours of the members in the system. Citizenship and democracy are interwoven with democratic principles grounded in citizenship rights (Zilla, 2022, p. 1529). The transition in focus from the institutions to non-institutional stakeholders reflects the transition from democracy to citizenship. Citizenship requires a sense of responsibility to maintain the democratic system by respecting the status of others as free and equal. Citizenship requires 'learning of a capacity for action and for responsibility ... learning of the self and of the relationship of self and other' (Delanty, 2002, p. 64). The term 'sport citizen' will be invoked throughout and rhetorically serves to emphasise the rights as well as responsibilities associated with democratic principles.

The characterisation of citizenship in sport will focus on the athlete population, limiting the scope of potential sport citizens and excluding most groups currently considered 'stakeholders' in the current sport system. There are many other stakeholder groups, such as local communities impacted by sport-related decisions, sponsors, and media personnel, among others. The manner in which these additional stakeholder groups are impacted by democratic principles is beyond the scope of this article. This decision is partially for simplicity in addition to athletes as a stakeholder group arguably already holding citizenship status within the current system (whether they recognise this or not). The IOC's Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration (IOC, 2018) is demonstrative of the treatment of athletes as citizens.

Athletes, in particular, have been dissatisfied with the current system and are advocating for more decision-making power, as indicated by the constitution of organisations such as the World Players Association, Global Athlete, and the Professional Tennis Players Association. Additionally, a number of lawsuits have been filed against institutional authorities in sport during the last few years, calling into question monopolistic practices and exploitation of athletes (James & Duval, 2023; Picazo, 2025; Scarcella, 2024). Although athletes have been fighting for more of a role, the focus on internal stakeholders within the governance of sport (Geeraert, 2021) has resulted in a sport system that is unable to accommodate the participation of athletes. If athletes are to leverage their influence for greater impact, they will need to recognise themselves as sports citizens, which will require education.

The focus of this article is the interplay between democracy, citizenship and education and what the relationship means for sport. Considerations for each of these topics will be explored throughout the article, including the aims of civic education, active and passive citizenship, and the factors which inform different categories of citizenship. Understanding these factors is important for their application to the cultivation of citizenship in sport.

METHODOLOGY

This article aims to identify those aspects necessary for cultivating citizenship before considering their applicability to sport. The primary methods utilised are conceptual analysis and critical reasoning. The article is informed by published research, theoretical frameworks, and logical argumentation. Specifically, the study primarily relies on Eichberg and Jespersen's (2009) framework detailing education for sport, education by sport, and education through sport as well as Turner's (1990) typology with respect to citizenship theory.

CIVIC EDUCATION, DEMOCRACY AND SPORT

The section will address the 'challenging of authority' as a democratic principle that can be improved upon via education[1]. As opposed to decisions being made with mass

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[1]   Due to space constraints, not all principles can be examined. The ability to challenge authority will serve as the primary example of a democratic principle throughout while principles such as participation, representation, transparency and election procedures will be excluded.

public participation-democratic authority in more modern and large societies relies on the possibility of challenging authority (Enslin & White, 2003; Warren, 1996). Challenging authority may consist of an array of behaviours such as holding representatives accountable during elections or utilising court systems. Athletes have been able to push back against some of the standards set by international sport institutions via lawsuits; however, they are unable to do so within the international sport system.

The behaviours necessary to challenge the system are not innate; they need to be taught or nurtured in some way. Civic education is one of the tools intended to help citizens understand their civic rights and responsibilities within a democratic system. Dewey, who understood democracy as political, moral, economic, and educational, placed special emphasis on the role of education in promoting deliberative democracy and preparing future citizens who will one day be expected to engage in the governance of their society (Dewey, [1916] 2021). The aim is not to convince them of how they should feel on certain issues (Garrison & Neiman, 2003), but to develop the skills necessary for deliberation and other skills necessary for tending to one's civic duty. Such skills include reasoning, critical thinking, and communication skills. Educational institutions should prepare citizens to engage in critical thinking for reasoning when confronted by political issues and matters of public policy (Bailin & Siegel, 2003).

Aside from the significance that school curriculum could have, Dewey also believed that school as an institution has a social life of its own, which offers additional education (Darling & Nordenbo, 2003). This includes navigating relationships with authority figures such as teachers and staff, in addition to opportunities to build social capital and develop relationships with peers. Similarly, Tyrš, the founder of the Czech Sokol movement, held the belief that national education coupled with physical training was necessary to prepare Czechs for the challenges they faced in the mid-19th century (Jandásek, 1932). The Sokol movement was intended to foster democratic behaviour, including civic responsibility, self-governance, and communal living – behaviours that would foster bonds amongst participants and prepare them for impending challenges (Jandásek, 1932). A holistic approach to education undergirds Tyrš's philosophy, incorporating multiple strategies in the pursuit of civic education.

Formal, non-formal, and informal education

Different techniques can be called upon for civic education. One way of understanding learning techniques is through the employment of formal, non-formal, and informal techniques. Formal education is structured by learning objectives, time, and space. Such learning occurs in institutionalised contexts and is hierarchical, with the flow of knowledge travelling from teacher to pupil. Non-formal education generally occurs outside of institutionalised contexts, and while it can be structured, the 'main goal is not learning per se, but doing something worthwhile, often in non-educational settings as the workplace or a club' (Eichberg & Jespersen, 2009, p. 429). Informal education occurs during daily life and leads to mutual learning. There is no fixed hierarchy, and parties learn from each other. The education that traditionally occurs within school classrooms would be an example of formal education, while the education that comes from participation in the social dynamics within the school would be more indicative of non-formal and informal education.

When applying the different 'configurations of learning' – formal, non-formal, and informal – to sport, Eichberg and Jespersen (2009) refer to them as education 'for', 'by', and 'through' sport. According to the authors, education *for* sport is 'mostly of a technical character, and normally linked to well-defined sport disciplines and competitive activities' (Eichberg & Jespersen, 2009, p. 435). This is what likely comes to mind for most when they think of education in a traditional sense: learning about a specific sport or technique in order to better engage with that sport or technique. Education *by* sport serves a more functional role with sport 'regarded as a tool for certain "functions", which are good for the individual or for society as a whole' (Eichberg & Jespersen, 2009, pp. 435–436). The main outcome of education by sport is social welfare with examples from Eichberg and Jespersen (2009) including healthy lifestyle, social and ethnic integration, and sport for peace. Lastly, education *through* sport is a way of developing oneself through the practice of sport, with Eichberg and Jespersen (2009) stating that 'the way is valued more than a certain result or product' (p. 436). The outcome of education *through* sport includes enabling and empowering participants and learning about others.

Education *through* sport points to the educational nature of sport and is emblematic of shared values between sport and democratic principles. As is the case with schools, sport is also a setting that sees participation from many young people, and sport is arguably better able to address the development of citizens than traditional school settings. Coubertin writes 'sport would seem an excellent preparatory school for our lives these days, and an excellent peacemaker, too. Note that these principles of competition and mutual assistance are linked closely to the egalitarianism we were discussing earlier – an equality not of conditions, but of relationships' (Coubertin, 2000, p. 216). Sport would be better suited for the non-formal (education *by* sport) and informal (education *through* sport) education techniques than traditional school settings.

The more rigid the hierarchy is in a system, the less democratic the educational activity will be. The hierarchical relationships in school settings are more entrenched with the teacher and other staff as the authority figures, while students are expected to adhere to the rules enforced by the school officials. There are also limited opportunities for multifaceted relationships with peers since students are not in competition with each other and may not even have to work with each other unless a teacher assigns group assignments. Most peer interactions revolve around social bonds, which are important, but not sufficient for civic education. Alternatively, sport provides more opportunities for participants to navigate relationships with peers, and the role of the coaches and other authority figures can be minimized without harming the activity much.

Educational nature of sport

The educational nature of sport is also a significant feature of Olympism. Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic Movement, viewed Olympism as a philosophy of life (Müller, 2000). The revival was not an homage to the past, as there was an ideological agenda attached to it (Gruneau, 1993). Coubertin viewed education, more specifically peace education, as the key to addressing the ills of the world and having peace amongst nations (Müller, 2000). Therefore, Olympism is more of an educational

tool that can be used to better the world (Müller, 2000; Kidd, 1996). The notion that Olympism is an educational philosophy has been carried forward and remains an aspect of the modern Olympic Movement. An excerpt from the 2025 iteration of the Olympic Charter states that:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for internationally ecognized human rights and universal fundamental ethical principles within the remit of the Olympic Movement (IOC, 2025, 8).

The Olympic Games are used as a means to present ethical sport to the world (Parry, 2020). Durántez et al. (2010) refer to sport as 'the transmission belt of [Olympism's] fundamental formative, peacekeeping, democratic humanitarian, cultural, and ecological principles' (p. 4). In addition to Olympism and sport acting in the service of peace education, Olympism is also emblematic of a commitment to democratic egalitarianism (Durántez et al., 2010). The values associated with Olympism are those which, according to Parry (2020, p. 144), 'are already, necessarily, in sport'. De Coubertin recognised that those values inherent to everyday sport were also present in communities aspiring to embody liberal humanism around the world (ibid.).

In 1919, Coubertin declared that 'the athletic group is, in a way, the basic cell of democracy. The only inequality that continues to exist in that group derives from nature while the artificial inequality introduced by men is banished' (Coubertin, 2000, p. 739). The dynamics amongst athletes make sports activities a medium for civic education because the nature of sport shares similarities with democracy. Sport inherently shares many of the values associated with democracy as they are both agonistic social practices (McCoy & Martinkova, 2022). Agonistic social practices provide an arena for our polemical nature to enact itself. *Polemos* (i.e. struggle or strife) is an aspect of our humanity that drives us to challenge ourselves and achieve something. Though *polemos* leads to us being in competition with others, it is also a uniting force since it impacts everyone. This sentiment is echoed by Coubertin, who wrote that 'sport calls for an intense spirit of competition and solid camaraderie... Thus, sport is based on mutual assistance and competition. These same principles serve as the foundations of modern democracy' (Coubertin, 2000, p. 216).

As agonistic social practices, both sport and democratic politics have internal characteristics (preparing to be the best, competing with the best, and winning while risking defeat) (Loy & Morford, 2019; McCoy & Martínková, 2022) and external characteristics (openness, fairness and justice) (Daqing, 2010; McCoy & Martínková, 2022). An example of education *through* sport, these internal and external characteristics are indicative of shared values inherent to democratic engagement in political life and sport that are not inherently present in other institutions, such as schools.

Coubertin's linking of sport to democratic principles appears to have been limited to sporting practice. However, the sports system as a whole can also be considered to exist on the democratic spectrum. In some ways, athletes can currently be understood as citizens within the sport system. If some of the democratic principles are present (e.g., there is a possibility of challenging authority), then the system can be understood as democratic to an extent. The democratic education gleaned from sport

participation could also be applied to the preparation of athletes regarding their future participation in the governance of sport. Sport and democracy may be naturally inclined toward particular behaviours, but there is a way to engage with the activities that reinforce particular values or mute them. These variations can be better understood by examining different types of citizenship and how they are cultivated.

CULTIVATING CITIZENSHIP

The educational techniques can have a role in the process of preparing athletes to participate in the governance process, particularly as it relates to nurturing relationships with teammates and competitors, and gaining a better understanding of their sport. However, citizens ultimately are able to choose what type of citizen they are (active or passive) based on how they view external influences from the public/private sphere and influences from above/below. The influences impact how citizens believe concerns should be handled and whether they will initiate action for said changes or if they rely on institutional actors to lead.

Active and passive citizenship

In addition to the types of education that can be pursued, the different forms of citizenship should also be considered. Two common forms of citizenship have been described as passive and active. A passive perspective of citizenship is a more 'thin' conception of 'citizenship-as-legal-status', while the active perspective holds that the 'extent and quality of citizenship is a function of citizens' participation in the community' (Zilla, 2022, p. 1527). There are differing notions regarding the rights and responsibilities that accompany such a status. Enslin and White (2003) present two conceptions of citizens: citizens as passive bearers of rights and citizens of robust republican virtue.

Enslin and White (2003) describe the former as 'one aspect of a person's life [that] may be variously weighted by different individuals, and that in the end exists, as does politics, to support individuals in their personal and shared projects' (p. 113). The latter is marked by a belief that 'participation in political affairs has an intrinsic value and playing an active part in the political life of one's society is held to be superior to the private pleasures of family, personal relationships, and work' (Enslin & White, 2003, p. 113). The distinction is not being made to suggest that one form is superior to another. It is reasonable to assume that citizens would exhibit behaviours more in line with passive or active citizenship depending on how they feel about the state of affairs during a given period. There is no right or wrong way to be a citizen. However, it should be a conscious decision, which implies that citizens should be made aware of the different forms of citizenship and how they are cultivated.

How civic education is approached in a society will also impact the relationship to citizenship. Those citizens who are passive bearers of rights would be less active in the civil sphere and rely more on existing democratic institutions and pressure groups like NGOs and the media (Enslin & White, 2003). Education for this citizenry would likely focus on awareness of rights and responsibilities and may encourage citizens to act if democracy is in danger. In contrast, citizens of robust republican virtue would prioritise citizenship as one of the most, if not the most, important facets of their lives

and would need to be prepared for democratic vigilance in addition to consistently engaging in the public sphere (Enslin & White, 2003). An understanding of civic virtues becomes more significant for the latter case. The curriculum can be shaped to reflect the characteristics of either passive or active citizenship, and should be considered carefully. It is ultimately up to the individuals in a society to decide what type of citizen they aim to be, but they should be presented with the various options so that they can make an informed decision.

Turner's typology

Other external factors that impact citizenship behaviours include how the democratic society came into being. Based on the history and context in a given society, citizenship was shaped differently. In response to Marshall's (1981) idea that full citizenship consisted of the civil, the political, and the social, Turner (1990) argued that there are two noteworthy dimensions of citizenship; the private/public dimension[2] and the above/below dimension (the latter of which will be henceforth referenced as top-down and bottom-up). Turner delineates the passive/active dichotomy based on whether citizenship was fought for from below or granted from above (Turner, 1990). The other dimension's tension lies between the 'private realm of the individual and the family in relationship to the public arena of political action' (ibid., p. 207). The dimensions should be regarded as existing on a continuum: public/private being viewed from left to right and above/below being viewed from top to bottom. Any system that purports to be democratic would be located in one of the quadrants, though no two systems would be exactly in the same place.
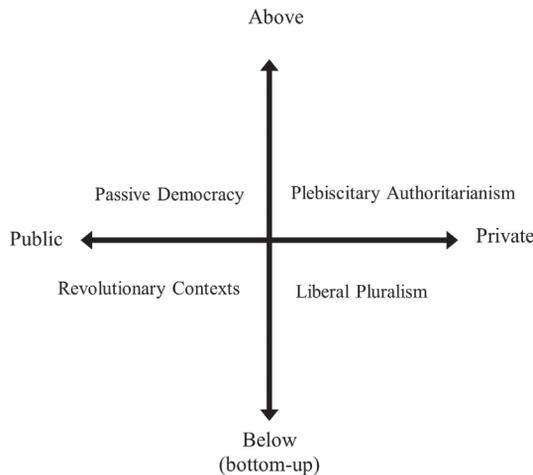

Figure 1 Author's interpretation of Turner's (1990, p. 200) Heuristic Typology of four political contexts for the creation of citizenship rights.

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[2]   The language is similar to that which was used above when citing Eichberg. Turner's private/public division is not the same as Eichberg's market and state spheres given the latter are in references to areas of life and activities within the societies while the former refers more to the approach of citizens.

Turner examines how citizenship arose in France, Germany, England, and the United States to illustrate his typology. According to Turner (1990), *revolutionary citizenship*, as seen in France, places an emphasis on the public arena while regarding the private world of individuals as suspicious and is driven by bottom-up forces. According to Turner, it often collapses into totalitarianism and leads to 'forms of public terror' (1990, p. 200). *Liberal pluralism*, which he associates with American liberalism, stems from interest group formation, which results in bottom-up movements for rights. However, these movements are somewhat contained due to a commitment to the cultivation of virtues in private. The emphasis is placed on 'the rights of the individual for privatised dissent' (ibid., p. 200) and there is fear that mass movements will result in a trade-off of individual freedoms for broadened equality.

Passive democracy, arising from top-down influences and an emphasis on the public sphere, results in citizens who are subjects rather than active participants in society. Such was the case in England, as the citizen was merely a subject. While the legitimacy of representative institutions is recognised, there is 'no established tradition of struggles for citizenship rights' (Turner, 1990, p. 200), and this relegates citizenship as a strategy for the institutionalization of class conflicts controlled by governmental agencies. The authoritarian form of democracy, which Turner refers to as *plebiscitary authoritarianism*, also results from a top-down approach to citizenship wherein 'the state manages public space, inviting the citizens periodically to select a leader, who is then no longer responsible on a daily basis to the electorate' (Turner, 1990, p. 201). This results in citizens viewing private life as a sanctuary from the tyranny of state regulation. He associates this form with a fascist brand of citizenship that emerged in Germany. The more a democratic system skews above and to the right, the more passive the citizenry is. More active citizenship would result from systems that skew farther down and to the left. Most systems would be between these two extremes as is the case with sport (without its embeddedness in political systems).

CULTIVATING CITIZENSHIP IN SPORT

The cultivation of sport citizenship is influenced by both education techniques and external factors shaping individuals' relationship to citizenship. A characterisation of citizenship in the international sport system would also include the two dimensions. The top-down (above)/bottom-up (below) distinction in sport can be understood as the governing institutions in sport being all-powerful, and athletes are the recipients of rights and protections, as opposed to acting more like sovereign actors who are not reliant on the state. The public/private distinction is more about space or the athletes preferred sphere when cultivating virtuous behaviour or dealing with injustices: do they utilise the public arena (e.g. protests, petitions, unions) or do they rely on the private realm (e.g. individual, family). Sport exists somewhere between the end points on both continuums, though it does lean closer to one end for both dimensions.

Citizenship rights would be granted from above in sport since there is a reliance on governing institutions, and athletes function more as subjects. Within the Olympic Movement, athletes are subject to the decisions that governing institutions (e.g., IOC) and regulatory bodies (e.g., World Anti-Doping Agency) put into place. There are limited opportunities for athletes to participate via committees, but athletes are

not typically involved in setting rules or standards. Further, sport appears to prioritise the private end of the spectrum, placing emphasis on the individual commitment to development and preparation. There have been occasions when stakeholders unite and fight against dominant structures such as coming together to ensure the exclusion of apartheid South Africa (Booth, 2003; Nixon, 1992) or athletes and fans coming together to ensure the downfall of the football 'Super League' (Hamilton, 2021) or referendums in cities regarding the hosting of mega-events (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2017; Könecke et al., 2016; Morgan, 2019).

All of the aforementioned influences are necessary for a functioning sporting system. However, with the way that sport is currently approached, there is more of a reliance on the influence from the top-down and private side of the continuum, which would make it a *passive democracy*. This is not a criticism of athletes. The category of citizenship associated with a system has little to do with the current citizenry; who are inheriting factors that shape their relationship to citizenship. The public/private and above/below distinctions can serve as examples of factors to be considered when the goal is to shift power. Though sport may be inclined toward influences from the private sphere and from above, an effort can still be made to engage with behaviours which are more associated with the public sphere and from below if the goal is to challenge authority and shift power.

Challenging those regulations that they consider to be unfair would be a way in which athletes could engage with the public sphere and bottom-up side of the continuum, though such behaviour is sometimes discouraged by the rules. The Olympic Charter Rule 50.2 states, 'No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas' (IOC, 2025, p. 94). In reaction to the IOC's stance on the matter, it is reasonable to expect athletes to be more focused on the cultivation of excellence in private, developing a mindset that benefits training and competitions at the elite level instead of engaging the policy development process or challenging the system. Such a perspective is important
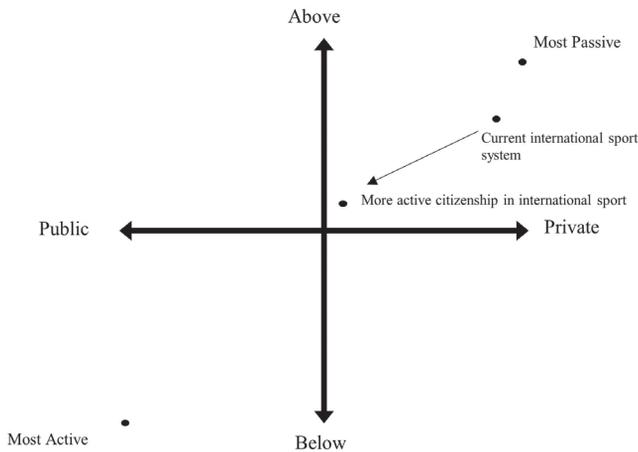

Figure 2 Author's re-interpretation of Turner's (1990) Heuristic Typology of four political contexts for the creation of citizenship rights with the addition of most passive and active points and an illustration of citizenship in sport becoming more active as the arrow demonstrates.

in sport, and the internal characteristics associated with sport as an agonistic social practice (preparing to be the best, competing with the best, and winning while risking defeat) are all indicative of the athlete's engagement in the private sphere.

This has been the outcome without much active effort to approach sport in a manner that produces sport citizens who are able to participate in its governance or cater to issues that arise in sporting clubs or on the field of play. A sport system that exhibits the characteristics of a *passive democracy* is not inherently negative because a range exists regarding the public/private distinction and the above/below distinction.

The figure above was created using Turner's (1990) typology, and the points added in the far-right upper corner and the far-left lower corner indicate hypothetical systems that would develop the most passive behaviors and the most active behaviours. With regard to sport, a hypothetical international sport system nearing the most passive point would entail a system that leaves athletes completely vulnerable to the tyranny of the IOC and other governing institutions and relies on the private sphere to ensure success and address issues. A hypothetical sport system nearing the most active point on the figure would see athletes as active drivers regarding decision making, and the IOC would serve to implement those decisions, and redress would be pursued together in the public sphere. In reality, the behaviours within most systems are more 'mild', which is why passive and active citizenship should not be thought of in absolutes. The current sport system is located in the passive democracy quadrant, though it is not at the most passive point; while the system is very reliant on the role of institutions, there is still some role for other actors. The private sphere is also preferred over the public sphere, but there have been occasions when athletes come together on an issue. As denoted in Figure 3, while the sport system may be in the *passive democracy* category, *more* active citizenship in sport is possible. This can be pursued within the current system by working to cultivate the bottom-up approach and engaging more with the public sphere in sport. Utilising different education techniques in sport is one way of attempting to engage with the below and public influences in sport.

Education reform in sport

If seeking to approach education in a way that prepares athletes to actively participate, the following changes could be made using education *for*, *by*, and *through* sport as a framework for understanding how they may one day be active sport citizens. In addition to the rules and technical competence for a particular sport, education *for* sport could also include education about sport as an agonistic social practice, values in sport, and the significance of categorisation of athletes. This would likely involve formal instruction, though it does not have to be limited to formal settings. Education *by* sport would include those efforts to use sport as a means to cultural integration (e.g. sport for development programs) or to reinforce social bonds and charitability (e.g. volunteerism in sport). These efforts are generally intentional, though they extend beyond sport itself. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is an example of advocating for sporting participation to reinforce religious values, while the Sokol movement in Slavic societies is an example of sport reinforcing cultural principles related to strengthening minds and bodies (Jandásek, 1932; Pavlin & Čustonja, 2018). Education *through* sport might consist of approaching sport in a manner that facilitates horizontal relationships as opposed to reinforcing vertical relationships.

This could involve athletes having larger roles in their nutrition and training plans or even determining the frequency of training collaboratively as opposed to the coach deciding. According to Butterworth (2014), it is problematic that 'athletes are largely expected to think passively, as a part of a team that overrides any individual convictions' (p. 879). Challenging traditional approaches to the athlete-coaching (as well as other authority figures) dynamic could serve as an example of education *through* sport.

Some strategies could also be a hybrid of these educational modes presented by Eichberg and Jespersen (2009). Based on the characterisation by Mareš (2023), philosophical consultation could serve as an example of a hybrid approach that prioritises goals related to education *for, through,* and *by* sport. Mareš writes 'the main purpose of philosophical consultation with an athlete is to challenge and clarify his/her thinking and deepen his/her understanding of the self and the (sporting) world' (Mareš, 2023, p. 193). A number of strategies could be employed to cultivate behaviours which are indicative of more active citizenship, so they are fostering a sense of community and learning more about themselves and the activity that they are engaging in.

Education *for* and *by* sport can support the effort, but it is education *through* sport that has the capacity to facilitate athletes' engagement with the bottom-up and public influences in sport. As expressed by Eichberg and Jespersen (2009), education *through* sport leads to philosophy through sport, and given the understanding of sport, philosophy, and democracy as agonistic social practices (McCoy & Martínková, 2022), education *through* sport would also lead to 'democracy through sport'. The capacity to morally educate and prepare participants for democracy in institutional contexts is inherent to sport. The difference between a sport system that yields participants who experience moral development and better understand themselves and others (education *through* sport) is a matter of mindset and opportunity to develop in such ways. Institutions are more likely to recognise formal education as 'real' and set aside funds to support such education. However, with small changes and a willingness for authority figures in sport to facilitate more horizontal interactions between participants, non-formal (education *by* sport) and informal (education *through* sport) educational opportunities would be plentiful.

Sport, like democracy, is relational, and when approached in a particular manner, fosters a culture of trust and mutual understanding. Such qualities are more likely to be exhibited in active citizens than passive ones. While education *for* sport or formal education techniques can be employed (e.g. Olympic Education, knowledge of sport as an agonistic social practice), it will mainly require a shift in mindset regarding the approach to sporting practice (i.e., education *by* sport, education *through* sport).

CONCLUSION

The sports system can be characterised as democratic (to an extent), given the Olympic Movement's commitment to upholding good governance principles. Consequently, athletes function as citizens within the sport system. Whether they are aware of their status as citizens is unclear, though there are at least some who are fighting for additional rights and responsibilities. This is illustrated by the rise of athlete associations or unions and lawsuits that have been filed against International Federations. The current sport system is reflective of a *passive democracy*, per my interpretation of

Turner's (1990) typology. While passive citizenship is not inherently bad, citizens in such a system are more reliant on institutions to act on their behalf. Behaviours associated with active citizenship would lead to citizens taking more action on behalf of themselves as well as the system as a whole.

Cultivating more active citizenship amongst athletes requires a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions that contribute to passive versus active citizenship as well as various educational techniques. Efforts to engage with the system from the bottom-up and engage with the public sphere would result in athletes being less reliant on institutions to cater to their needs and less focused on their own individual experience. Various education techniques – education *for* sport, education *by* sport, and education *through* sport – can also impact the cultivation of citizenship. Education *through* sport is particularly useful for the cultivation of citizenship because of the shared principles amongst sport and democracy as an approach to life. While institutions are responsible for education *for* and *by* sport, athletes themselves have a lot of control regarding education *through* sport. If athletes are looking for additional rights and responsibilities, then they are interested in cultivating more active citizenship. This article presents factors that should be taken into consideration regarding citizenship in sport.

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