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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role and value of defiance in sport. I argue that defiance is a virtue in sport and make a case for it as a spirited and praiseworthy way of counteracting burdened conditions. To do this, I distinguish between three forms of defiance: 1) ascetic defiance as persistent practising to overcome limits and outdo difficulty, 2) agonistic defiance as intensified efforts to counteract and overcome opponents, and 3) rebellious defiance as counteracting unjust authority. These describe ways in which athletes can counteract burdens in sport, and for each dimension, I present examples from sport to illustrate the relevance of defiance for this particular area. I conclude that defiance is at the heart of the sporting practice and that it is virtuous when enacted towards the right things, at the right time, in the right way and towards the right ends. I round off by briefly pointing to areas for further studies of defiance in sport.

KEYWORDS Defiance; virtue ethics; thumos; practising; competition; rebellion

Introduction

In Greek mythology, Prometheus is the incarnation of a defiant character. He defied the will of Zeus as he stole fire from the gods and brought it to humanity, signifying the beginning of civilisation, culture and enlightenment. For his resistance to power, he was punished by the gods, who tied him to a mountain where he was tortured by an eagle that daily devoured his liver. He refused, however, to give in and his stubborn endurance and persisting defiance has been interpreted as an emblem of the human spirit's capacity for resistance and endurance.¹

Nietzsche (1999, 48–49) drew on Aeschylus' version of this myth to celebrate the glory of activity that shines around Prometheus and his firm defiant belief. It illustrates the strong and powerful expression of will involved in defiance, which indicates why this phenomenon can be of value in sport. The concept of defiance is an attempt to translate the German word *Trotz*, which has a slightly broader meaning. I will use defiance both in the ordinary sense of showing resistance or disobedience, and in a broader sense of acting in spite of something and doing

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something nonetheless. In German, the term for the 'difficult age' or 'the terrible twos', where children assert their will against adults, is literally 'the age of defiance' (Trotzalter). It would, however, be a mistake to disdain the phenomenon of defiance as merely a childish expression of obstinate reluctance, or only an irrational and stubborn refusal to comply with anything or anyone. This seems, however, to be the case in most psychological accounts of defiance, where it has been considered a form of problematic and even pathological behaviour.² Some existential philosophers have also been critical to defiance. Kierkegaard (2006), for example, analysed it as the highest form of despair expressed in a demonic rage against existence. As an alternative, I take the foresight involved in Promethean defiance as a clue that can inform an edifying and constructive account of defiance, which I will draw on in this article to argue that defiance is a virtue in sport. On this account, a defiant athlete is a person who says 'No!' to unjust power and authority. It is also a person who says 'I shall do this nonetheless!' when challenges seem overwhelming, or 'I will prevail in spite of the circumstances!' when facing adversity and strong opposition.

Defiance has received very little attention within the philosophy of sport. This may be due to the negative connotations attached to it. Defiant athletes are often considered to be the uncontrollable 'enfant terribles' in sport, whose behaviour seems to disturb their performance and provoke their surroundings. I think the attitudes of athletes such as Mario Balotelli and Nick Kyrgios would count as examples of that. But as Gerald Marzorati observed in *The New Yorker* after Kyrgios recently lost to Nadal at Wimbledon: 'He is drawn to the *signs* of defiance, not to what defiance is capable of signifying.'³ I think there is a lot of truth to this observation. Therefore, while acknowledging that some signs of defiance can be problematic and counterproductive for athletes and their surroundings, I aim to explore the constructive value that defiance can have in sport. I will argue that sport is a field of practice conducive to the attitude and expression of defiance due to the challenging nature of activities, the direct encounters with opponents, as well as the explicit power relations with coaches and others. I will also argue that defiance is of particular value in sport, due to the strong will and energy associated with it. Still, defiance is a complex phenomenon that can have a range of different meanings depending on *what* one defies, *how* one defies, and *why* one defies. I will analyse some fundamental ways defiance can be enacted in sport by distinguishing between three forms: 1) ascetic defiance, 2) agonistic defiance and 3) rebellious defiance. To prepare the analysis of these, I first outline a virtue ethical account of defiance.

Defiance as a virtue

Drawing on an Aristotelian framework, I consider defiance a virtue of character, i.e. a disposition expressed in action (Aristotle 2004, Book II). It is, however, a virtue that requires a slight modification of the framework. The

main modification concerns the background conditions for defiance, and the relation to the ends it pursues. Here I draw on Tessman's (2005) notion of *burdened virtues*. She describes how ordinary virtue ethics only considers the well-being of those included in a well-functioning social community, and how recent accounts tend to begin with a conception of flourishing and the good life (*eudaimonia*) and work backwards to describe the virtues that are conducive to achieving this. However, in cases where the background conditions for virtue are not met due to adverse circumstances, flourishing is out of reach. In such cases, Tessman argues that we need to consider other virtues that are praiseworthy, although they do not stand in direct relation to flourishing for a person and a community. These include virtues 'that would be good under better conditions', or 'whose goodness or nobility comes from its potential to help bring about a world in which flourishing will be more possible' or 'that can improve a life even if that life cannot be truly good' (Tessman 2005, 167).

These reflections are relevant for defiance as a virtue in sport. Defiance aims for human goods and excellences. Still, the achievement of this end can be uncertain, and defiance is in many cases enacted by those who are somehow in an inferior and burdened position that excludes them from achieving those goods. This will be most evident in the case of rebellious defiance later, and this makes it fruitful to consider defiance a burdened virtue as Tessman describes it. Potter (2016) has done this to argue that the readiness to be defiant is a virtue: 'being defiant at the right times, in the right ways, and for the right reasons is praiseworthy' (xiv). She also argues that defiance is sometimes an unburdened virtue. This is also the case in sport, where defiance cannot be reduced to enactments by the socially oppressed. However, rather than discussing in each case if the enactment of defiance is a burdened or unburdened virtue, I find it relevant to analyse defiance through a broader conception of burden than the social and political account in Tessman's analysis. Therefore, with inspiration from existential philosophy, I use it in a broader sense to describe *the burden character of existence*. This includes adverse conditions related to social, individual and physical burdens, and I believe it captures the general conditions under which defiance is enacted. In sport, it implies that not all burdens preclude athletes from achieving human goods and excellences. Sport-specific burdens related, for example, to challenges, difficulties opposition, strains and exertions, can very well stand in direct relation to human flourishing, and counteracting these can still involve acts of defiance. In the analysis, I will provide examples of this in an attempt to show how an account of defiance as a burdened virtue, in the expanded sense of the term, makes it particularly potent for the study of defiance in sport in ways that both adopt and transcend Tessman's analysis.

In Aristotelian virtue ethics, each virtue is related to a sphere of human action and feeling. For example, courage concerns fear and confidence, and temperance concerns pleasure and pain. The virtue of defiance, I suggest, concerns spiritedness (*thumos*). English translations of *thumos* are many and include spiritedness, spirit, passion, heart, life-force, anger, mettle, temper and emotion. *Thumos*-energies involve ambition, pride, self-assertion, stout-heartedness, as well as desire for justice, dignity, honour and recognition (see e.g. Sloterdijk 2010). *Thumos* played a central albeit ambiguous role in ancient Greek philosophy (see Harris 2009; Hobbs 2000). In Homer, it described both a physical and a spiritual life-force, the stuff or seat of feelings, passions and thought. In Plato, it was the spirited part of the soul that mediates between the rational and irrational parts. Aristotle's use of *thumos* is related to self-assertive feelings that can involve both pride, honour and anger. It describes a form of non-rational desire for some apparent good, and he referred to Homer's description of *thumos* as boiling blood in his discussion of the close relation between *thumos* and courage (Aristotle 2004, 1116b). Aristotle also described *thumos* as the seat or agency of anger, and sometimes as a form of anger. He distinguished between irrational *orgē*-anger that is rooted in appetites and *thumos*-anger that listens to and to some extent is controlled by reason (Aristotle 2004, 1149a-1149b; see also Harris 2009, 54 and, 97).⁴ Although the distinction is not always clear, Aristotle seemed to be more indulgent towards *thumos*-anger. I see defiance as a right candidate for a virtue that guides the *thumos*-energies to make the enactment of spiritedness appropriate. The other way around, I think that spiritedness (*thumos*) is suitable to account for the intense energies involved in defiance.⁵

In Aristotelian terms, defiance is what makes us well disposed in relation to spiritedness. This implies that defiance is a mean state that is praiseworthy and noble, while the extremes of deficiency and excess are vices. I take the deficiency of defiance to be spiritless (*athumos*),⁶ which implies feeling disheartened or discouraged when action is called for. On the other side, excess of defiance would be harsh-spiritedness (*oxuthumos*),⁷ which can be expressed as overzealousness or irascibility where one's temper boils over too easily. Between these extremes, defiance is praiseworthy when people defy the right things, at the right time, in the right way and towards the right ends.

To get it right and hit the mean, the enactment of defiance must rest on practical wisdom (*phronesis*). This is a practical rationality between theoretical knowledge and skills, which involves both deliberation and doing. Potter (2016, 115) worries that *phronesis* is too strong a requirement for defiance and that it disciplines and tames the passions required for defiance. I (Aggerholm 2015, 66–69) have argued that such worries, which arise from a lack of clarity in Aristotle's account of deliberation, can be overcome by drawing on phenomenological accounts of moral agency. Here the enactment of virtue rests on a pre-reflective, embodied and situated rationality (see

Gallagher 2007, 201). This account can inform an understanding of practical rationality as a virtuous comportment of athletes that is not intellectualist and does not conflict with their passionate and spirited engagement.

Defiance in sport

To sum up the previous section, I consider defiance a virtue of character, which counteracts burdens in praiseworthy ways and with appropriate spiritedness. To examine the relevance of this account of defiance in sport, I distinguish between three dimensions that involve substantially different ways of counteracting burdens in sport. For each, I briefly clarify the philosophical background and present examples from sport to illustrate the relevance of defiance for this particular area. I will not claim that the three dimensions exhaust the ways athletes can enact defiance in sport, but I do see them as fundamental ways in which virtuous defiance is enacted.

Ascetic defiance

Ascetic defiance involves persistent practising and training to overcome one's limits and outdo difficulty. I analyse it with inspiration from Sloterdijk's (2013) account of the practising life and in particular his outline for an anthropology of defiance in which 'humans appear as the animals that must move forwards because they are obstructed by something' (40). Sloterdijk presents this as governed by an ethics of the Nonetheless (45–46).

WHAT: In ascetic defiance, the burdens to overcome relate to one's limitations and inhibitions. It is that which obstructs and hinders you in doing what you want. These limitations can be necessary or contingent. The necessary limitations are those that athletes cannot change. These can, for example, be disabilities, genetic dispositions or the inevitable decline of one's physical body when coming of age. The contingent limitations are those that can be challenged and overcome by athletes. These can, for example, be one's attitude to dangerous situations, the present physical form of one's body, or other kinds of inhibitions such as self-loathing or shyness. Both types of limitations can spur defiant responses and in both cases the objects of defiance can be described as difficulties or challenges that, due to the limitations, appear as almost impossible to overcome. Sloterdijk (2013, 117 ff.) describes such challenges with the metaphor of Mount Improbable, and this is what defiant athletes attempt to climb.

HOW: The means for defying one's limitations is to overcome them by persistently practising ways of shaping, strengthening, improving oneself in spite of the hindrances. In Sloterdijk's (2013) analysis, he departs from a case of a German violinist, Carl Hermann Unthan, who was born without arms and learned to compensate for this by playing the violin with his feet.

Unthan illustrates how one can override a limitation and make 'an artistic virtue out of an anomalous necessity' (46). Positive emotions accompany the efforts involved in this. Indeed, Sloterdijk argues that there is no room for tragic attitudes or depressive moods when overcoming oneself: 'Living in the Nonetheless imposes an ostentatious zest for life on those who are determined to succeed' (47). He uses the case of Unthan's overcoming of himself to inform a general ascetology, as it illustrates the fundamental 'laws of defiant existence' (48). A central part of this is an analysis of 'over-compensatory movement' (52), a term which relates to the physiological principle of over- or supercompensation. This principle describes how the reaction exceeds the stimulus when our physical body adapts to workload in training by restoring the muscle tissue to a higher level of strength if it has time to recover. It holds the secret of how general overexertion can lead to higher performance levels. The principle also applies to the existential realm, where Sloterdijk uses it to analyse the growth of a 'virtuosic habitus' (321). It describes a form of superadaptation, which explains how the kinetic systems accommodate refined abilities through repetition, whereby: 'ability subjected to persistent furthering tension produces, almost "of its own accord", heightened ability' (321). This applies both when athletes enact ascetic defiance to make an athletic virtue out of necessary limitations, or practice to overcome their contingent limitations. In either case, obstructions can function as prerequisites for moving forward in spite of them, if athletes see them as incentives for redeeming, corrective and compensatory exercises.

WHY: Ascetic defiance aims to transcend one's limits and develop a capability for performing highly improbable movements in spite of the burdens. Moreover, it aims at being able to perform 'the near-impossible almost effortlessly' (Sloterdijk 2013, 321). Achieving this can be a personal victory. Sloterdijk describes Unthan, who became a violin virtuoso in spite of not having arms, as a 'victor over his disability' (46). But at the same time, people who stand out by overcoming their limitations, who become outstanding nonetheless, can 'become convincing teachers of the human condition – practising beings of a particular category with a message for practising beings in general' (46). Similarly, Sloterdijk analyses the smile with which the acrobat bows after performing the *salto mortale* at a great height, to convey a moral lesson to the ones who look up to their endeavours (196). So, the ones who have practised to overcome improbable obstacles and go beyond the limits of what appears possible, send a message to others whereby their performance becomes a common good. They embody the ethics of the Nonetheless as they erect themselves as exemplars that can inspire others and perhaps trigger a defiant response in those who are receptive and open to admire their endeavours.

Ascetic defiance in sport

Sport is an arena that is conducive to defying limits, as athletes practise to overcome challenges in multiple ways and at all levels. Indeed, Sloterdijk (2013) describes athletes as exemplars of this sort of defiant response to burdens, because they 'gain degrees of freedom from the burden character of existence by consistently outdoing the difficult through the even more difficult' (417). Therefore, if sport is an arena for coping with difficult physical challenges, then ascetic defiance is arguably a fundamental and praiseworthy element of sporting activities.

The overcoming of limiting factors is arguably most notable in cases of physical disability. So, para-athletes or special athletes would probably be the most obvious example of this form of defiance. They testify to the fact that you can perform in outstanding ways in spite of having a disabled body, and that you can make an athletic virtue out of necessary limitations.

Ascetic defiance can also help to understand the driving force in many other forms of extraordinary endeavours in sport. For example, many ultra-marathon runners continuously overcome themselves, as they defy their pain and fatigue to transcend the limits of what their body is capable of. Ascetic defiance may also contribute to understanding cases in extreme sports such as parachuting, wing-suit flying, paragliding, and climbing, where practitioners defy their fears of danger. The movie 'Free Solo' provides insight into the endeavour of Alex Honnold who, as the first person ever, climbed El Capitan without ropes to secure him. It shows how he was drawn to and, indeed, could not let go of the challenge posed by his Mount Improbable. His performance defies belief, and I think it is fair to say that he defied the limits of what human beings can do. When attending to the cameras on the route, Honnold was even smiling. He didn't defy his fears, though. Apparently, he doesn't experience fear the way others do. That may be due to genetics (brain scans showed remarkably low activation of his amygdala, the brain's fear centre), or perhaps he has grown virtuosic habits that make the extreme dangers seem normal for him. But his extraordinary climb might still be interpreted as a case of defiant compensation. In the movie, he indicates that part of what drives him is a feeling of self-loathing. In light of that, his exceptional climbs might be seen as a way of overcoming that particular inhibition to make himself a climbing virtuoso, nonetheless.

An obvious worry concerning this form of defiance would be that athletes go too far in their desire to overcome limits. In Hesiod's version of the myth of Prometheus, his deed signifies a hubristic, arrogant and destructive ambition for mastering and remaking human nature. The fire that he brought to humanity has been related to transhumanism, and to biomedical and biotechnological forms of enhancement in sport (see Murray 2007; McNamee 2008, 194–205; Franssen 2013). Without engaging in the debate about the moral implications and potential dangers of these new possibilities, I want to stress

that this is not the version of Promethean ambition I analyse as a virtue. Although the boundaries between scientific aid and human effort are notoriously difficult to draw in modern sport, transcending the necessary limits of human nature by means of performance enhancing drugs would not be a case of ascetic defiance. Still, defying the limits of performance by means of persistent practising and training might in itself cause concern, especially when governed by the quantitative norms of modern sport, where athletes continuously strive to break records. Avoiding this would require ecological reforms of modern sport (Loland 2001; Welters 2019), which might contribute to make the challenges imposed by Mount Improbable relative to the individual athletes and the particular contexts, rather than absolute measures. It would not, however, remove the spirited desire of athletes to move upwards, push boundaries, counteract burdens, and pursue difficult and sometimes dangerous challenges. This is, for better or worse, an essential part of sport and the defiance of human limits is, therefore, a praiseworthy effort in this domain.

Agonistic defiance

Agonistic defiance involves intensified efforts in contests to counteract and overcome others. Here, defiance is related to challenging or daring someone to do or prove something, as well as responding defiantly when being challenged. It is rooted in the archaic meaning of defiance as challenging someone to fight, which makes it relevant to describe it with inspiration from Nietzsche's (1997) analysis of ancient agon in the essay *Homer's contest*.

WHAT: The burdened condition in agonistic contests stems from wrestling, literally or metaphorically, with opponents. Hence, the object of defiance is at least one other contender. In one sense, defiance describes a central element of all competition in sport, as it is involved whenever athletes challenge each other to a contest. Readiness and willingness to do so is a virtue that is essential to all activities in competitive sport. But in a more restricted sense, which I will focus on, there are certain burdensome conditions in competitions that seem to call for agonistic defiance in particular ways. These occur when athletes experience a sense of inferiority as they meet opponents that are better than themselves, and where they still hold a strong belief that they can overcome them. I don't think that simply running over a weaker opponent would count as an act of defiance, and similarly, competing with opponents much better than yourself would exhaust the contest and render defiant struggles futile. For this reason, the ancient Greeks removed the best among them (through the method called *ostrakismos*) to stimulate and awaken the competing game of strengths (Nietzsche 1997, 39–40). In modern sport, regulation and classification systems serve to secure close competitive encounters.

HOW: The means for defying strong opponents is an agonistic struggle to assert yourself and overcome the inferior position. In Nietzsche's (1997, 38–39)

analysis, he described how facing someone you want to overcome can trigger attitudes coloured by emotions of envy, resentment, jealousy, and a flame of ambition, ignited by comparing yourself with the more excellent other. In many contexts, these qualities are considered as unfavourable, but the ancient Greeks did not consider them as flaws. They related to the good Eris, the goddess of strife and discord, and were seen as a 'beneficent deity' in contests that stirred contesters to action (38). For the present analysis, they can describe emotions that, when enacted in proper ways, can play a constructive role and ignite intensified efforts in competitive encounters in sport.

In some cases, agonistic defiance may also involve competing with a 'chip on one's shoulder'. In its original meaning, this idiom appears almost identical to the archaic meaning of defiance: in the early nineteenth century America carrying a chip of wood on one's shoulder was an invitation to fight, and anyone who dared to knock it off was agreeing to fight (Phythian 1993). Cherry (2019) has recently analysed a 'chipped shoulder' as a productive motivational phenomenon in sport, which can enhance athletic performance and involves 'a lasting grudge, controlled anger, and desire for nonmoral payback' (148). It is, I think, more limited in scope than agonistic defiance, but it may describe part of the emotional background of it. At the same time, it can help to analyse defiance as a broader phenomenon, since a 'chipped shoulder' is rooted in 'being overlooked, slighted or underestimated in sports presently or at one point in one's career' (148) and therefore tends to transcend defiant responses in specific contests.

WHY: The aim of agonistic defiance is the joy of victory, and defiant responses to strong opponents can produce extraordinary athletic performances, just as rivalry produces great works of art. Nietzsche (1997) quotes Plato to illustrate this point: 'Behold, that which my great competitors can do, I can do, too; yes, I can do it better than they. (...) Only contest made me a poet, a sophist, an orator!' Likewise, for athletes who can mobilise a defiant 'I will show you!' or 'I will prevail in spite of you!' attitude, strong opponents can contribute to bringing out the best in them. At the same time, the aim of such defiant striving for victory transcends merely egoistic self-assertion. Excellent performance inspires the whole sporting community. Indeed, for the ancients, the goal of contesting (and agonal education) was the welfare and good of the whole, i.e. the city or the civic state (40).

Agonistic defiance in sport

Defying others in contests can describe a central experiential dimension of competition and contribute to an understanding of virtuous ways of coping with significant adversity. Hoberman (1997) has taken Nietzsche's analysis into a discussion of the sportive agon in modern sport. Doing this, he describes Promethean ambition as a theme that unifies the athletics of

ancients and moderns (294).⁸ The strong energy involved in defiant responses can illuminate competitive phenomena such as when athletes and teams who compete as underdogs defy the odds to win nonetheless. Being an underdog and competing against the odds can evoke strong, defiant energy in individuals and teams, and there is something admirable about athletes who keep their spirits up, play with heart, and even intensify their struggles when victory seems improbable. They can inspire others to face up to competitive burdens and strive to overcome opponents in spite of adverse circumstances. They reveal how it is often the background for the victory, the defiant struggle in the contest, that qualifies the joy of winning. Nesti (2007) has described this phenomenon well:

(...) victory tastes sweetest after overcoming intractable obstacles and apparently insurmountable challenges. If the aim is to win at all costs or in the easiest way possible, the elation and ecstasy at winning despite the odds would make no sense. The most striking testimony to this is that as sports fans, performers, or coaches we are most moved emotionally by teams or individuals who show a spirit of defiance to emerge as winners.

Leicester City's race to win the Premier League title in 2016 is a good example of this spirit of defiance, and in general, the fact that underdogs can achieve unlikely victories brings hope and inspiration to everyone in sport. I also think that the phenomenon of athletes and teams who seem to erect or invent imaginary sources of opposition, even if they are in a superior position, testifies to the value of defiant struggle against others. An example of this could be when the New England Patriots, despite their unprecedented success, began to pick up on doubters and appeared to exaggerate criticism of the team at the beginning of 2019. Their quarterback, Tom Brady, for example, claimed that: 'Everyone thinks we suck',⁹ which can be interpreted as a way to create defiant energy in the team by stirring up an 'us-against-them' atmosphere. Similarly, adverse fan reactions can provide defiant fuel for athletes, which might help understanding why both Djokovic and Medvedev thanked booing fans after matches during the 2019 U.S. Open in tennis.¹⁰

Defiance can also help to describe and understand the spirited strength animated in athletes that come from behind and fight back from unfortunate circumstances during competitions, to make a surprising and improbable comeback. Fry (2011) has analysed comebacks as a reversal of adverse circumstances. This can be 'pure comebacks' during a competition, such as 'the miracle of Istanbul' where Liverpool FC fought back from 0–3 to win the 2005 European Cup final over AC Milan. Or the comeback can form part of a larger narrative, for example, when athletes make impressive comebacks after setbacks, illness, or injury. It takes a strong character to fight one's way back in sport and refuse to give up even under adverse conditions where prospects of prevailing are not in your favour. Fry argues that particular

virtues expressed in action facilitate comebacks, and he suggests that faith, hope and love are particularly significant. Nesti (2007) has suggested the virtue of courage to be central in comebacks. In addition to these virtues, and possibly in unity with them, I will argue that defiance is strongly involved in all forms of comebacks in sport. The spiritedness of defiance can describe how some athletes seem to grow to their task and intensify their efforts to counteract significant pressure and adverse circumstances in inspiring and admirable ways.

Rebellious defiance

Rebellious defiance involves saying 'No!' to counteract unjust authority. I analyse it with inspiration from Camus (1956) work on *The Rebel*. In this, he noted that Aeschylus endowed Prometheus with lucidity and created 'a touching and noble image of the Rebel and gave us the most perfect myth of the intelligence in revolt' (26). Although defiance has, in most cases, a more limited scope than revolt and rebellion, his analysis can inform the general structures of defiance concerning burdens caused by unjust use of authority.

WHAT: Here, the object of defiance is a condition of dominant and suppressive authority that appears unjust, unfair or irrational to the athlete confronted with it. The defiant acts can be directed at governing bodies of sport that neglect or support unjust social oppression and unequal treatment of athletes. It can also be directed at particular individuals, such as coaches, who exaggerate their authority or in other ways act in unjustified ways.

HOW: The means of defiance is a direct, open and persistent attempt to resist or stand up against authority. The defiant athlete here takes an active stand against power and faces the determining factors head-on. It is a matter of enforcing one's own will against the will of another, for example, by refusing to obey. This includes a firm belief in your powers and rights, and standing firm to the pressure that someone or something poses on you. It may also involve feelings of anger and indignation.¹¹ In all cases, it involves a loud and clear 'No!', which is a rejection that draws a line and states that 'this is enough!' A classic case of such virtuous defiance was when the black woman, Rosa Parks, in 1955 defied racial segregation rules in Alabama by refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus.

In the same way, a defiant athlete is a person who says 'No!' and whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. As Camus (1956) argued, there is an affirmation, a 'yes', implied in the 'No!' because it is accompanied by a conviction that one stands up for what is right, for example, that the use of power is unjust. Just as the rebel 'implicitly brings into play a standard of values' (14) that she is willing to stand up for, the defiant refusal to obey unjust authority is at the same time a rejection of a general condition, for example, racism, homophobia or gender inequality. The defiant 'No!' of the

athlete denotes a passionate affirmation and is, like rebellion, an 'effort to affirm the dignity of man in defiance of the things that deny its existence' (105).

WHY: This form of defiance aims to stand up and defend *who you are*. This aim transcends the individual, as the claim for recognition of who you are, and respect for your dignity and integrity implies a 'defense of a dignity common to all men' (Camus 1956, 18). It may be that the athlete is not fully aware of this aim before the act. Sometimes the pre-reflective sense of injustice, which ignites the defiant act, can give rise to an awareness of the burdened condition of the athlete and others during or after the act. The defiance of unjust authority is nonetheless a fight for a common good, a will to overturn unjust power that threatens the rights and values of yourself and others.

Rebellious defiance in sport

Saying 'No!' can be relevant in many situations in and around sport, and there are numerous examples of athlete activism, where athletes directly confront authority to overturn power. The most well-known example is probably 'Black Power Salute' at the 1968 Olympic Games. The kneeling of American football players during the U.S. national anthem can represent a similar act of defiance against racial inequality. Being a woman in sport, which is often dominated by men, can also require actions that counteract male privileges. The continuous fight for inclusion and equal rights for women in sport has been an arena for various forms of defiance. For example, women soccer players in many national teams today defy being treated unequally, as they are refusing to accept a lower payment than the male players. Recent years has also seen campaigns against homophobia in sport, for example in the 'principle 6 campaign' at the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. In Scandinavia, several soccer players have recently stood up and said no to homophobia. These forms of defiance do not just say 'No!' to white supremacy, male dominance or heteronormative prejudices. They defend at the same time the dignity of black people, women and non-heterosexuals.

There are also more ambiguous cases of defiance in sport, where it is more difficult to discern if the acts are praiseworthy or not. Consider, for example, the solidarity sit-down protests of the peloton during the 1998 Tour de France. These were defiant reactions to the treatment by the French Police and can as such be seen as appropriate. However, if the case was that most of the peloton was, in fact, using EPO and other performance enhancing substances, would the protest then be praiseworthy? Consider also the defiant 'Hell no!' of Caster Semenya in May 2019 when asked if she would accept hormone therapy to block her naturally elevated levels of testosterone. It was a reaction to new policies deployed by the track and field's governing body (IAAF) that excluded female athletes with testosterone levels over 5 nmol/L from competing. The rules are discriminatory, but they seek to secure fairness for other female

athletes by not allowing for demonstrative biological advantages. So, was Semenya's act of defiance praiseworthy? I cannot go into details with the specific cases here, and the moral evaluation of Semenya's case is still a matter of debate. I think, however, that the acts of the 1998 peloton and Semenya can be seen as praiseworthy instances of defiance as a burdened virtue, even if one might disagree with their specific protests. Both acts of defiance were sparked by a sense of injustice and they have led to important debates about the treatment of athletes, which have contributed to enlighten policymaking. It may not have led to flourishing for the individual athletes, but the sporting community has arguably benefitted from their refusal to comply.

Unfortunately, there are also numerous examples of coaches in sport who exaggerate and exploit their authority. The gravest examples of this would probably be the cases of sexual abuse in some sport environments that have come to light in recent years. Other examples can be coaches who force athletes to reduce weight, take performance-enhancing drugs, compete when injured, etc.¹² Even in less severe cases, and in particular for young athletes, standing up against authoritative coaches is not always easy and far from always beneficial to one's athletic career. Still, under such burdened conditions, even small acts of defiance would, indeed, be praiseworthy. Here, defiance would take courage, especially when individual athletes stand up for their or other's rights and dignity because their act of defiance would go against established authority and power structures in their communities. Counteracting this in the dressing room or elsewhere can be taken as a break with loyalty and an act of betrayal. Hence, it puts the defiant athlete in a vulnerable position.

This form of defiance, where athletes stand up for themselves or show solidarity with others who face injustice, would count as a burdened virtue in Tessman's account, because it may not lead directly to flourishing and the good life. Still, it can potentially lead to social change and a better life for the defiant athlete and others in similar situations. Pointing to a case from cricket, where two players protested against racial injustice in Zimbabwe by wearing black armbands during a 2003 World Cup match, McNamee (2008, 126–127) has argued that such defiant acts can be a virtuous response to racism in society. He also used the example to describe how sport can be a powerful medium for social change. Challenging unjust circumstances can, in the longer run, contribute to social justice and revision of policies in sport and beyond.

Concluding remarks

In this article, I have argued that defiance is a virtue in sport. It plays a central and constructive role, as a way for athletes to counteract burdened conditions. It is an integral part of practising and competing to overcome limits and opponents in sport, and defiance can contribute to challenge and subvert unjust authority in sport. Defiance is at the heart of the sporting practice, and

enacted towards the right things, at the right time, in the right way and towards the right ends, it is a virtue in sport. From this conclusion, I want to highlight two shortcomings of the analysis, which I see as areas for further studies of defiance in sport.

First, it would be relevant to include qualitative empirical studies to better describe and understand defiance as part of athletes' engagement in sport. I have indicated some ways in which athletes express defiance in various kinds of sport. However, to better understand the experience and existential significance of defiance, it would be valuable to employ qualitative studies of the phenomenon. Such studies can inform a phenomenological account of defiance, which may contribute to revise and elaborate on the dimensions and enactments of defiance I have discussed in this article.

Second, if defiance is considered a virtue in sport, then a central normative and pedagogical question to ask is how to nurture this virtue among athletes. To answer this, Aristotle (2004, 1103a) account of developing moral character can be informative: 'Virtue of character (*éthos*) is a result of habituation (*ethos*), for which reason it has acquired its name through a small variation on "ethos"'. Thus, virtues are developed by exercising and practising them. From a coaching perspective, this is commonly described as a task that involves initiating athletes into sport as a valuable practice, so that they can enact and uphold the traditions, conventions, and customs that belong to it (see Aggerholm 2017). Further studies are required to clarify the extent to which this applies to developing defiance as well. Tessman (2005, 50) had little to say about the practical project of cultivating burdened virtues, but I suspect that it may require some revision of the Aristotelian account. In particular when it comes to the enactment of defiance under burdened conditions such as unjust authority and exclusion, it appears insufficient to describe it as a result of habituation because athletes find themselves in unjust conditions that should be counteracted rather than incorporated. Therefore, the path to praiseworthy defiant acts might have to go through the development of a critical and questioning attitude to one's practice. I hope that the present analysis can inspire studies of how youth sport policies and talent development strategies can nurture critical spirits among young athletes, and provide social support for young athletes who dare to stand up against unjust forms of power.

Notes

1. There are various versions and interpretations of the myth of Prometheus. See McNamee (2008, 202–205) for a comparison of Hesiod's and Aeschylus's accounts and a discussion of them related to sport.
2. Adler (2003) was among the first to analyse the problems of defiance in his 1910 essay on Defiance and Obedience. Since DSM-III in 1980, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) has been a diagnosis for severe and persistent defiant behaviour.

3. <https://www.newyorker.com/sports/sporting-scene/wimbledon-2019-kyrgios-vs-nadal-and-the-difference-between-an-entertainer-and-a-champion>.
4. According to Harris (2009, 92), Plato seems to say that *thumos*-anger or 'noble anger' (*thumos gennaïos*) is necessary against wrongdoing in his work *Laws*. He also notes that Nemesius, bishop of Emesa, described *thumos*-anger as the body-guard (*doruphorikos*) of reason, and that Plutarch saw *thumos*-anger as a mark of greatness in action (*megalourgia*). However, as Harris also notes, it is notoriously difficult to distinguish between the two forms of anger in ancient philosophy, and the difference between *orgē* and *thumos* remains unresolved in Aristotle.
5. The reflections here suggest some ways that defiance can exist in unity with other virtues. Defiant spiritedness may help and sustain the enactment of courage, and even temper may help in guiding the anger involved in defiant acts. Similarly, I think that the virtue of resilience, understood as the ability to adapt positively to significant adversity (Russell 2015), can describe a valuable background, perhaps even a prerequisite, for the enactment of defiance.
6. See Harris (2009, 16 and 268) for a brief discussion of *athumos*. It translates into 'spiritless', but he also describes that it can mean 'despondent', 'faintheartedness' and something close to 'lack of courage'.
7. See Harris (2009, 162 and 345). He translates *oxuthumos* into both harsh-spirited and irascibility. Allen (2000, 210 and 231) uses the terms 'sharp anger' and 'hot-tempered' as translations of *oxuthumos*.
8. In his analysis, Hoberman (1997) subsequently describes how scientific and pharmacological influences in modern elite sport have complicated the athletic agon in various ways that often threaten the health of athletes. This concern is related to the worries about biomedicine and biotechnology discussed earlier. It is not clear, however, which version of the myth of Prometheus Hoberman refers to.
9. See: <http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000001010392/article/tom-brady-after-pats-rout-everyone-thinks-we-suck>. I want to thank Paul Gaffney for pointing out this example to me.
10. After his confrontation with a spectator, Djokovic said 'Even, maybe he didn't want to do me a favor, he did me a favor. Big favor.' Medvedev thanked the boing spectators and said: 'Your energy tonight gave me the win.' <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/30/sports/tennis/us-open-results-schedule.html>. I thank Pam Sailors for making me aware of these cases.
11. It is worth noting here that Aristotle (2004, 1135b) described anger as an appropriate response to apparent injustice.
12. A recent documentary has revealed mistreatment of young Danish swimmers from 2003–2012 by national coaches who, for example, forced swimmers to weigh in front of others. Several swimmers describe that they developed eating disorders, depression and other related conditions due to this coaching behaviour. For an English summary of the case, see <https://swimswam.com/danish-swim-federation-under-fire-for-mid-2000s-public-weighings/>.

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