On the Role of Creativity in Sport
by
Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen

In order to nuance the dialogue about creativity among sport researchers and practitioners, this Ph.D. thesis challenge the recurrent idea that creativity is an in-game phenomenon reserved for the few offensive, match-decisive players on a team, that create chances and help the team win matches. Besides displaying such result-oriented ideas concerning the role of creativity in sports, the most research in the field is absorbed in defining, measuring and developing creativity as an outcome variable. Grounded in the pragmatist desire to emancipate practice from limiting routines and traditions, a pivotal topic of this Ph.D. work is to treat creativity as an input variable (i.e., process rather than product), and, in turn, advance our understanding of why (different kinds of) creativity is important in sports. Accordingly, this thesis is based on three sub-studies.

In sub-study 1, creativity is understood as the playful process of exploring unusual action possibilities (i.e., transcending norms, intentions and affordances). Among more, this fresh perspective emphasises that creative activities may catalyse growth (i.e., expand the players’ horizons, purposes and responses), develop players with active habits (i.e., inventive and flexible rather than routine habits), and broaden their experiences by facilitating discovery, exploitation and origination of novel actions. Basically, creativity is grasped as a vital resource for all players development and enjoyment in sport – not just for the performance of the chosen ones.

Exploring the perspective of Danish elite football coaches, sub-study 2 outlines 15 metaphors that represent qualitatively different understandings of creativity in sport (e.g., magic, invention, and style). While the learning- and engagement-oriented metaphors entail promising potentials for development contexts in sports, the study uncovers the risk that winning-oriented coaching interest may have a pervasive impact on how coaches conceive of creativity. For example, the desire to win may entail coach-led activities where known, efficient solutions are intensively rehearsed (i.e., to appear creative), rather than player-centred tasks where novel, unfamiliar ideas and situations are curiously explored (i.e., to be creative). Consequently, this may limit the ways in which the players experience their sport, reduce their creative abilities, and even limit their future performance level.

Sub-study 3 is based on an action research (AR) process on an elite U17 football team, where theoretical creativity concepts and principles were used as tools to play with when designing and implement new drills. Besides outlining a new framework for designing situated creative activities in football, the study outlines a set of potentials (e.g., revitalising the players curiosity) and barriers (e.g., requiring integration with football-relevant purposes) for applying creativity in an elite football context. Although several unique potentials were envisioned, most remained somewhat unexploited due to a range of cultural, sport-specific and pedagogical obstacles that needs to be overcome to utilize the full potentials of creativity in competitive sports.
To fulfill the requirements for the PhD degree Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen has submitted the thesis: On the Role of Creativity in Sport, to the Faculty Council of Medicine at Aalborg University.

The Faculty Council has appointed the following adjudication committee to evaluate the thesis and the associated lecture:

Professor Lars Tore Ronglan  
Norwegian School of Sport Sciences  
Norway

Professor Jean Côté  
Queen University  
Canada

Chairman:  
Professor Julie Borup Jensen  
Aalborg University  
Denmark

Moderator:  
Associate Professor Lars Domino Østergaard  
Aalborg University  
Denmark

The PhD lecture is public and will take place on:

Friday 06 March 2020 at 13:00  
Aalborg University – Room D2-106  
Fredrik Bajers Vej 7 D2  
9220 Aalborg East

Program for PhD lecture on

Friday 06 March 2020

by

Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen

On the Role of Creativity in Sport

Chairman: Professor Julie Borup Jensen
Moderator: Associate Professor Lars Domino Østergaard

13.00 Opening by the Moderator
13.05 PhD lecture by Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen
13.50 Break
14.00 Questions and comments from the Committee
14.00 Questions and comments from the audience at the Moderator’s discretion
16.00 Conclusion of the session by the Moderator

After the session a reception will be arranged