

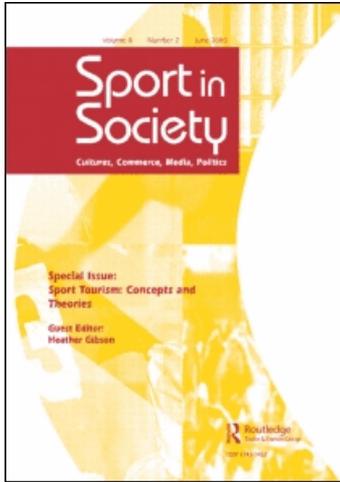
This article was downloaded by: [University of Colorado, Boulder campus]

On: 31 January 2011

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 785022307]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Sport in Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713634841>

Workers' Playtime? Child Labour at the Extremes of the Sporting Spectrum

Peter Donnelly; Leanne Petherick

Online publication date: 06 September 2010

To cite this Article Donnelly, Peter and Petherick, Leanne(2004) 'Workers' Playtime? Child Labour at the Extremes of the Sporting Spectrum', Sport in Society, 7: 3, 301 – 321

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/1743043042000291659

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1743043042000291659>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Workers' Playtime? Child Labour at the Extremes of the Sporting Spectrum

PETER DONNELLY and LEANNE PETHERICK

Workers' Playtime was a BBC Radio lunchtime variety programme, broadcast live from factory canteens around Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. Its title recognized lunchtime as a break from work, a time when workers might play. When applied to children, when children are workers, this title takes on a more sinister connotation. Play is supposed to be characteristic of childhood, and play is considered to be intrinsic to healthy child development – physical, mental, and social. When applied to children who work at sport, and in the industries that supply sporting goods, 'workers' playtime' has a cruel irony. This article is about those children.

The vast majority of the world's nations have ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹. By their signature, nations have committed themselves to the best interests of children (defined as all humans under 18 years of age). Forty of the 54 Articles in the CRC deal directly with children's rights, and four refer directly or indirectly to children's participation in sport and physical activity. For example, Article 24 affirms 'the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ...', Article 28 'recognize[s] the right of the child to education ...', physical education being implicit in this right since it was previously affirmed in the 1978 UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Charter of Physical Education and Sport,² and Article 29 states that education involves 'the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest'. However, it is Article 31 that directly recognizes:

1. the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child ...
2. the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and [States Parties] shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Given this international recognition of children's rights to participate in sport and physical activity, it may be surprising to note that almost half of the 40 Articles dealing directly with children's rights are occasionally or routinely

violated in most countries when we consider children's involvement – direct and indirect – with sports. Human rights are interconnected in various ways, and although this article deals most directly with Article 32 of the CRC (Child Labour), the process of child labour involves violation of many of the other rights acclaimed in the CRC. The essay begins with a short overview of child labour; moves on to consider three specific forms of child labour in sport: children's involvement in the manufacture of sporting goods, child trafficking for the purposes of sport, and children's involvement in high-performance sport; and concludes with recommendations for resolving the issue of child labour in sports.

Child Labour

Article 32 of the CRC recognizes:

... the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

States' Parties are expected to establish a minimum age for employment, regulate the hours and conditions of employment, and set appropriate penalties in order to enforce these standards.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes that work is normal for children:

After the age of six or seven, children may have small tasks around the home, run errands, or spend some time helping parents to run the family farm. This can make a healthy contribution to their development ... [with] children learn[ing] to take responsibility and pride in their own activities Even in the wealthiest countries, children may be encouraged to work a few hours a week.³

Child *labour* is different. In child labour, children 'are being exploited, or overworked, or deprived of their rights to health and education'.⁴ Blanchard notes that child labour may be defined as: 'children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future'.⁵

The ILO is even more specific about the characteristics of child labour:

- working too young (children in developing countries often start factory work at age 6 or 7) working long hours (in some cases 12 to 16 hours a day)

- working under strain (physical, social or psychological)
- working on the streets (in unhealthy and dangerous conditions)
- working for very little pay (as little as US\$3 for a 60-hour week)
- working with little stimulation (dull, repetitive tasks which stunt the child's social and psychological development)
- taking too much responsibility (children often have charge of siblings only a year or two younger than themselves)
- subject to intimidation (which inhibits self confidence and self esteem, as with slave labour and sexual exploitation).⁶

Nobody knows how many child labourers there are in the world. The ILO estimates that 16 per cent of the world's children (some 246 million) are child labourers; that 12 per cent of the world's children are in the worst forms of child labour (approx. 184 million), and that some 186 million are less than 15 years of age.⁷ ILO Convention 182 (2001) is specifically intended to end the worst forms of child labour (e.g. sex workers, working in dirty and dangerous conditions, etc.), and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has been established to monitor progress.

Child Labour in Sport

As noted in the introduction, there is an essential contradiction between labour and sport, especially for children. Children labour in the cause of sport in various ways. Some are workers in the sports equipment and sportswear factories of developing nations, labouring to produce the equipment and uniforms that will be used by others (including other children) to participate in sport. Others are physically talented children in wealthy nations whose talents have been recognized, and who have been encouraged to specialize early on the high-performance sport development track. Between these two are children from poor countries who are bought and sold to be athletes in wealthier countries. The sociology of sport is only beginning to recognize children's involvement in the production of sporting goods, and child trafficking in sport.⁸ However, there is a growing body of literature in the sociology of sport on the problems of children in high-performance sport, and that is reflected in the third section below.

Child Labour in the Sporting Goods Industry

The processes of economic globalization that resulted in the downloading of manufacturing jobs to developing nations led to the emergence of two related protest campaigns in the 1990s. The first concerned the conditions of labour, and particular attention was paid to the manufacture of sports shoes and clothing; the second concerned the issue of child labour. While sociologists of sport have paid some attention to the anti-Nike and other campaigns

concerning sweatshop work,⁹ they have not responded to evidence from NGOs such as Christian Aid and Global March about the widespread involvement of children in the manufacture of sports equipment ranging from soccer and rugby balls to badminton birdies and boxing equipment.

The first reports of child labour in the sporting goods industry appeared in 1995, and the issue started to come to public attention in 1997, with the signing of the Atlanta Agreement and the publication of Christian Aid's research report, 'A Sporting Chance: Tackling Child Labour in India's Sporting Goods Industry'.¹⁰ The Atlanta Agreement was conducted under the auspices of the US Department of Labor, which had reported the employment of children in the sporting goods industry in their document 'By the Sweat and Toil of Children'. The Agreement was signed by the Sialkot (Pakistan) Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Sialkot being the largest producing city in the world for soccer balls – the ILO and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The objectives of the Agreement were to:

1. Prevent and progressively eliminate the child labor in the manufacture or assembly of soccer balls in Sialkot and its environs;
2. Identify and remove children under the age of 14 from work and provide them with education and other opportunities; and
3. Facilitate changes in community and family attitudes towards child labor.

The Atlanta Agreement was joined by Save the Children – UK, which took on the responsibility of funding two NGOs in Sialkot, each working to improve education and the rehabilitation of children and families impacted by child labour.¹¹ The Christian Aid report, the research for which was carried out in conjunction with the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), identified child labour in settings such as a tannery preparing leather used in the manufacture of cricket balls, stitching Everlast boxing equipment, and stitching the panels in soccer balls in Sialkot's counterpart in India, Jalandhar. They pointed out that Sialkot produces 35 million balls a year – some 54,945 a day, or 2,289 an hour.¹² Christian Aid urged the British government to hold large corporations accountable for unethical corporate conduct.

Soccer balls became the focus of media attention in the lead up to the 1998 World Cup in France, with a number of newspaper articles around the world reporting that the balls to be used in the World Cup had been hand-stitched by child labourers in India and Pakistan. Two sport sociologists, John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson of the University of Brighton in England, attended a press conference in Paris just before the start of the World Cup (they were involved in a major research project on or FIFA Fédération Internationale de Football), when the first question that was asked concerned the child labour issue. A spokesperson for Adidas pointed out that children's small hands were

necessary to carry out the task of stitching together the panels of soccer balls, and that the children were not mistreated. A rather docile audience of sports reporters appeared to accept this absurd explanation. As Sugden and Tomlinson¹³ pointed out, it was not credible to think that humans, whose technological know-how had permitted them to land on the moon, could not devise a machine to stitch soccer balls; and the economic realities were that child labour was cheaper than the development of machinery. Christian Aid reported that children received as little as 14p for stitching a ball that sold in the UK for £14.99.¹⁴

Although children are involved in the manufacture of sports equipment other than soccer balls, and in other parts of the world (e.g. China, softball stitching in Latin America, etc.), the focus has remained largely on the manufacture of soccer balls in South Asia. The issue re-appeared with renewed energy when the organization, Global March against Child Labour, started a major campaign ('Kick Child Labour out of Soccer') leading up to the 2002 World Cup in Japan and Korea.¹⁵ They were able to obtain assurances from Adidas-Salomon that none of the balls used in the World Cup would be products of child labour, and that the company would no longer use child labour in the manufacture of soccer balls. The assurances were part of an agreement between FIFA, the World Federation of Sports Goods Industry (including Adidas-Salomon, Nike, Puma, Decathlon and Reebok), and the Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI). The agreement, outlined on the Global March website, involved the following assurances:

1. Limit number of suppliers' stitching centres that are used; all production facilities are audited against child labour and health and safety standards for general compliance; stitching centres must register with the ILO IPEC monitoring programme. The age documentation of workers in stitching centres is checked regularly by the suppliers, local staff, and independent monitors from the ILO.
2. There are four approved manufacturing partners in Pakistan, all located in Sialkot. These manufactured ball components are shipped to registered stitching centres, where footballs are assembled. The finished footballs are returned to the factory for quality testing, packaging and shipping. To prevent footballs from being made in unregistered sites Adidas-Salomon have implemented a product tracking system, which matches ball components with output, delivery records and payslips of workers from each stitching center. Adidas-Salomon staff checks these records regularly.

Various reports suggest that these agreements are routinely violated. For example the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN),¹⁶ which has been particularly active on this issue, noted that the newly established stitching centres were exempt from the Factory Act in India, which entitled employees

to several rights (e.g. a labour contract, an annual bonus, double pay for overtime, etc.). The ICN report, *The Dark Side of Football*, noted:

- There is strong evidence that a few members of the SGFI are hiding a part of their production from the monitoring system, in particular the largest exporter Mayor & Co. This company is supplying balls to Adidas, Mitre and Mundo, as well as to other FIFA/ISL-licensed companies. Mayor & Co. also supplies footballs with a Euro 2000 design for the European market, imported under FIFA/ISL-license by Mookie Toys.
- The contractual agreements between the ISL (the licensing organization of FIFA) and all licensed football importing companies who buy their balls in India are violated on the issues of (hiding) child labour, wages below the official minimum, misuse of advances paid to workers, obstacles to the right to organize, exemption from existing labour legislation and lacking health standards and sanitary facilities.¹⁷

Global March also focused on violations in its 2002 World Cup campaign, 'Kick Child Labour out of Soccer'.¹⁸ There are photographs on the website, one showing a child stitching the Adidas World Cup panel into a soccer ball; and another of a child stitching the 'child labour-free' panel into a soccer ball. According to Phillippe Roy, Global March's representative in Pakistan, middlemen in Sialkot evade the monitoring system by sending the ball pieces, manufactured for major corporations such as Coca-Cola (promotional balls) and Adidas, to small villages for stitching.¹⁹

Anti-child labour campaigns began to crystallize around the 2002 World Cup, but also looked to the future. For example, the European Parliament passed a resolution endorsing the Global March campaign, and called on the football industry to eradicate all forms of child labour. The European Parliament also called on FIFA and the national Football Associations to make the next World Cup (Germany 2006) the first international event free of child labour.²⁰ UNICEF says 'YES for Children Campaign' involved FIFA in their 'Say YES for Children Campaign' the 2002 World Cup. And the ILO's 'Red Card Campaign' (Red Card to Child Labour) took a much broader focus, and proposed that: 'The ultimate event in the campaign hopefully will be to celebrate the universal ratification of the convention against the worst forms of child labour at the World Cup football tournament in 2006.'²¹

Organizations, such as the ILO²², the UN²³, Global March²⁴, the Clean Clothes Campaign²⁵ to introduce fair labour practices into the international garment industry, and the various organizations of the anti-Nike movement, are beginning to take seriously the problem of child labour in the sporting goods industry, and to work to improve the conditions of work,

and to ensure fair wages and release time for education. However, there are clearly more steps to be taken before the 2006 World Cup can be declared Child Labour Free.

Child Trafficking in Sport

The process of trafficking children for the purposes of sport has received even less publicity than child labour in the sporting goods industry. However, during the 1990s, two specific forms of trafficking children in sport began to receive some publicity.

Camel Jockeys. The first was the kidnap and/or purchase of small boys, particularly in Bangladesh and Pakistan, for transport to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to be trained as camel jockeys. Camel racing is a popular sport, involving a significant amount of gambling, in several countries of the Arabian peninsula. Small children are preferred as jockeys because of their light weight. There is a risk of injury, sometimes death, in falls during training and races, and there is some evidence that the boys may be badly treated and poorly fed to keep their weight low. The Anti-Slavery Organization reports that evidence provided to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC sub-commission on the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities) suggests that boys are 'underfed and subjected to crash diets to be as light as possible, they are strapped to camels' backs but in a fashion that still permits slipping. Some are dragged and others thrown off; the children suffering injury or death. Children have little control over the camels in races.' Reports indicate that children as young as age two have either been kidnapped, or purchased from parents with promises (usually not honoured) that they will earn money to be sent to the parents, that they will receive an education, and that they will be returned when they reach the age of 11 or 12 and are too heavy to be of further value as jockeys.

Because this is clandestine activity, the actual numbers are quite difficult to determine. Newspaper reports compiled by Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) suggest that some 19,000 children had been taken from rural and coastal areas in Bangladesh to become camel jockeys, but they were also being used for organ transplants and drug trafficking.²⁶ The Ansar Burney Welfare Trust International (ABWTI) estimates that 30 boys a month are kidnapped in Pakistan alone to be taken to the UAE²⁷. And the *Trafficking in Migrants Quarterly Bulletin* reported that 3,397 children were trafficked from Bangladesh to Gulf states to act as camel jockeys.²⁸

LHRLA was the first organization to begin investigating the issue, and it was pressure from this international lawyers' association that led the Camel Jockey Association to change its rules in 1993; the new rules disallowed the use of children under 14 years of age, or under 45 kilos.²⁹ However, recent

journalistic reports suggest that the practice continues, with six-year-olds who are under 20 kilos still participating. Anti-Slavery has also been very active, putting pressure on the UAE to ban the 'import' of camel jockeys, and to end the use of jockeys under the age of 14.³⁰ Their recommendations include:

1. Carry out regular unannounced inspections to identify, release, and rehabilitate any child who is currently being used as a camel jockey
2. The government must ensure that those responsible for trafficking or employing under-age jockeys are prosecuted under existing laws.
3. Introduce legislation that prohibits the employment of children under age.

The US Department of State, in its 2001 country report on the UAE, made it very clear that none of the new 1993 regulations were being implemented. The report noted that the powerful families who own camel stables are above the law, and the demand for child camel jockeys continues even though some children are repatriated.³¹ Anti-Slavery recently found that even though the UAE government states that they are trying to end this abuse, a virtual postcard is, at the time of writing, still on the UAE's official website with a photograph of a young boy riding a camel at a race track.³²

Most recently, the International Office of Migration (IOM) was asked by the Bangladesh government to assist in the return of children who had been working as camel jockeys in the UAE. The IOM suggested that a medical committee, if established, could check the age and weight of jockeys before races, and airport checks would help stop the trafficking of children into the UAE. They pointed out that integrating children back into society would not be easy; often the children did not know their parents, following long absences since a young age, and they were no longer able to speak their native language.³³ ABWTI has been involved in rescue work, and was able to rescue 49 children from camel stables in the UAE during January to May 2001.

Soccer Players. The second form of child trafficking, which may occur on an even larger scale, is the traffic in child soccer players (from Africa, South America and, to some extent, Eastern Europe) to professional soccer clubs in Western Europe. In the early 1990s, self-styled agents and scouts began to recruit in the newly open countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union for talented young soccer players for the wealthy soccer clubs of Western Europe. Exclusive contracts were signed with poverty stricken parents in the devastated economies of these countries, and it is believed that many of the children and their families were exploited. Perhaps worse, because of the more extreme poverty and the greater distances (cultural and geographical) involved, is an ongoing traffic in talented young soccer players from Africa and South America. Again, agents contracting with professional soccer clubs in Western Europe sign agreements with parents and bring the children to Europe to try out

for and play on the clubs' youth teams. Those who do not make it in the soccer system are often not returned to their homes.³⁴

Belgium is often singled out as one of the worst offenders in this regard, with its recruitment of players from Africa. In a paper given to an IOM conference in Brussels, Belgian Senator Paul Wille noted:

We discovered that Belgium is one of the leading countries to 'import' football players from Africa to sell them on the European market. The problem was that young African boys who didn't receive a contract in a football team ended up illegal on the streets and [often] prostitution was the only way of surviving.³⁵

It is believed that many of the homeless children living on the streets of Brussels are abandoned soccer players from Africa. Because of the involvement in prostitution, abandoned soccer players in Belgium were mentioned in the country report of another IOM report on 'Trafficking in Unaccompanied Minors for Sexual Exploitation in the European Union'. The report notes:

There are known cases of [sexual] exploitation of young football players from Africa and South America in [the professional sportsmen] sector. Untrustworthy agents go to African and South American countries in search of young talent. These young men are lured to the West with the promise of playing for European football clubs.³⁶ If successful, a contract is signed with a club for a minimal wage for the football player. Often, the length of the contract is not respected so that the football club can own these persons as a commodity . . . The issue at stake here is the future prospects of these minors. In case they do not succeed in the football world, what becomes of them?³⁷

The situation in Belgium prompted various actions. For example, Paul Carlier started an organization called Sport and Freedom, and lined up an impressive group of human rights and trade union organizations to lobby the Belgium government for legal action. Despite resistance from Belgian professional soccer clubs, new legislation in 1999 prevented the granting of a football license to players under age of 18 who do not have a residence or work permit; increased the rates of pay for non-EU players; and made 'both clubs and agents responsible for the living, medical and travel expenses of non-European recruits for at least 3 years after their arrival'.³⁸

Critics in both France and Belgium have referred to trafficking young soccer players as 'the new slave trade'. A BBC news report³⁹ quoted a leading agent in France who stated that there must be stricter licensing laws for soccer agents, and France was proposing legislation to end transfer fees for players under the age of 18, to limit the activities of agents, and to restrict clubs from placing teenagers under contract. A newspaper report in *The Straits Times Interactive*,⁴⁰

after outlining examples of the traffic and trade of young soccer players between the ages of 10 and 17 (which included the dealings of Arsene Wenger, the manager of English club, Arsenal), notes, 'Amazingly, the selling of minors is not an offence.' A more recent report in the *International Herald Tribune*⁴¹ by Hughes states that, 'Procuring players of school age is rampant and unchecked.' Hughes goes on to note that soccer clubs in less wealthy countries such as Argentina depend on the development and trade of talented young players:

It is the lifeblood of soccer. It is also a business, a legal speculative trade through which some kids escape poverty. Consequently, some are forced quicker than is good for their physical development and broken in the process. Some find fame, most do not, and countless are left with a hole where adolescent fun and education should have been.

When former Argentine President Carlos Menem declared that he was going to end the trade in young soccer players, he was quickly reined in by the national soccer association, and the traffic in young players continues.

Other Sports. It may be argued that any conditions in professional or pre-professional sports that involve individual athletes under 18 years of age being treated as a commodity, that involve young athletes moving from their homes, and that are unregulated, might be considered as trafficking of children. Kidd and Macfarlane give an example of this kind of practice, which they termed 'child buying', in Canadian ice hockey some 50 years ago.⁴²

Community ice hockey programmes, rather than school and university programmes, function as the major talent development system for professional hockey in Canada and, from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s, community teams were tied directly to National Hockey League (NHL) teams. 'As a result, every [hockey playing] boy in Fredericton grew up knowing he was 'Black Hawk property', every boy in Winnipeg 'belonged' to the Boston Bruins'.⁴³ Agreements between the NHL and the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) were signed in 1947 and 1958, initially during a period of financial hardship for the CAHA. They ensured the sponsorship of teams, and the effective ownership of all young hockey players. The agreements ended in 1966 with the expansion of the NHL.

If we consider the current situation, the data suggest there is still evidence of the exploitation of children in hockey today. Selection drafts replaced direct sponsorship in 1966. However, a type of 'child buying' continues, especially in the form of the 'midget' draft of the best 14, 15 or 16-year-old players to elite, pre-professional 'Major Junior' hockey teams (which maintain a relationship with NHL teams). Although the teams are not technically professional, US universities classify the players as professionals and they are ineligible for interuniversity competition in the United States. The players

receive expenses, and are eligible for a bursary to a Canadian university; their games are played before ticket paying audiences. The system ensures that most of the talented adolescent players will have to leave home in order to continue playing. It is a system that makes young players vulnerable to exploitation. For example, they may be exploited by agents befriending parents, and taking advantage of parents' hopes for their children's future as a professional player by signing the children to contracts.

The system of scouting and agents outlined for soccer players above is also evident in ice hockey, and also seems to be growing in basketball. NHL scouts regularly visit Eastern European countries to import talented young players for Major Junior teams in Canada and the US. And in basketball, the trend to signing National Basketball Association (NBA) players directly from high school has started a youth movement that has blossomed in light of the US\$90 million contract that US high school player LeBron James signed with Nike (in addition to his NBA salary). Talent scouts and agents are exploring North America and the world now in search of talented young basketball players. We argue that this represents trafficking when the system is unregulated, and when the system caters to the interests of agents, scouts, and professional teams, but makes no provision for the health, education, income protection and social development of individuals who are considered to be 'children' under the UN definition.

Children in High-performance Sport⁴⁴

It is widely acknowledged that adult professional athletes are treated as commodities to be bought and sold, drafted and traded.⁴⁵ In the previous section we outlined how these principles have been applied to children, how talented child athletes (or just small children in the case of camel jockeys) are trafficked as commodities in the international system of professional sports. Treatment as a commodity, however, does not always involve trafficking. Talented child athletes in many sports, who train and compete while still living at home, may also be treated as commodities and be implicated in the system of child labour in sports.

Social scientists of sport in Canada and Germany have argued for over 20 years that children's involvement in high-performance sport may be viewed as a form of child labour. Children participate in highly work-like conditions; adults depend on children's work for their own employment and income; the receipt of income, expenses, and prizes formalizes their working status, but many labour in the expectation of future income.

The involvement of children in high-performance sport is relatively recent. The widespread emphasis on early talent identification and specialization in sport may be traced to the Montreal Olympics in 1976, when a 14-year-old Rumanian gymnast (Nadia Comaneci) was awarded the first scores of

10.0 ever recorded in the sport. She, and the large number of medals that were won by Soviet, Cuban and East German athletes, drew attention in the West to the sport system that had been developed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The system involved a broad base of children's participation in sports from which those who showed signs of athletic talent could be identified. Young athletes so identified were recruited for intensive and specialized training in a particular sport.

East European and Cuban success in Montreal triggered interest in the new system. Sport scientists began to conduct research into talent prediction, and early specialization in sport, and sport organizations began to recruit younger and younger athletes. The early success of the female gymnasts, and victories for young female athletes in sports such as figure skating and swimming, provided an additional incentive for early involvement and specialization. Such early intensive involvement was new to most other sports, and problems began to emerge.

By the early 1980s, commentators such as Cantelon were beginning to identify the new participants as 'child athletic workers', and their participation as 'child labour', and as a social problem.⁴⁶ Grüpe summarized the problems for children in elite sport programmes. They:

- are not permitted to be children
- are denied important social contacts and experiences
- are victims of disrupted family life
- are exposed to excessive psychological and physiological stress
- may experience impaired intellectual development
- may become so involved with . . . sport that they become detached from the larger society
- face a type of abandonment on completion of their athletic careers.⁴⁷

Donnelly began to study this issue in 1985, conducting a series of retrospective interviews with retired high-performance athletes in Canada.⁴⁸ The interviewees represented a variety of sports, and had had successful careers; all had intensive involvement in the sport during their childhood and adolescence; all were given every opportunity to address both positive and negative aspects of their careers; and each spent approximately ten times more time on the negative than the positive.

They reported a variety of problems that they connected directly to their early intensive involvement and specialization. These included:

- family concerns – problems such as sibling rivalry and parental pressure
- social relationships – missed important occasions and experiences during childhood and adolescence

- coach–athlete relationships – authoritarian and abusive (emotional, physical, sexual) relationships, especially male coach–female athlete
- educational concerns – any achievements were earned in spite of the sport and school systems, not because of them
- physical and psychological problems – injuries, stress, and burnout
- drug and dietary problems – some experiences of drug use, widespread concern about disordered eating
- retirement – widespread adjustment difficulties, especially when retirement was not voluntary.

Donnelly also asked the former athletes if they would repeat their careers (10 per cent said no, and 65 per cent gave a qualified yes) ‘knowing what [they] know now’; and if they would permit their own children to become involved in intensive training in their sport (40 per cent said no, and the 60 per cent who said yes suggested that their experiences and knowledge would help them to protect their own children from the problems and provide them with a more positive experience).

As a result of these types of critique, and especially following an intensive period of criticism about the US women’s gymnastics team following the 1992 Barcelona Olympics (their youth, tiny bodies, and stress fractures gave rise to numerous concerns about eating disorders and other problems), three sports organizations made rule changes. The Women’s Tennis Association raised the age for turning professional to 16 years because of the well-publicized burnout of young players such as Tracy Austin, Jennifer Capriati and Andrea Jaeger; and both women’s gymnastics and women’s figure skating raised the minimum age for international competition to 16 years. However, the new age limits appear to be only token changes. For gymnastics and figure skating they have done little to resolve the problems, and may even have made them worse. Extending the age of international competition without changing judging criteria, or introducing any regulations about health, nutrition, or bone density, may force adolescent girls to attempt to maintain a pre-pubescent body type until they are even older.

Children from all backgrounds, but most commonly now the middle classes, who have shown talent in ice hockey, swimming, figure skating, tennis, gymnastics, etc. – all of the sports that are invested in an early specialization developmental track – may experience the type of problems outlined above. Solving the problems created by early intensive involvement and specialization raises a question of balance. But that balance is difficult when we consider all of the adults who may have a vested interest in a child’s success in sport – parents, coaches, sport administrators, educators, sport scientists, sports medicine staff, agents and even media personnel.⁴⁹ Such vested interests may range from the often understandable ambition of parents to enable their children to attain

the highest level of achievement possible, to more material economic and career advancement interests.

For some of these individuals, their careers and incomes may depend on a child's success; and there are even cases of parents who have taken out a second mortgage in order to finance their talented child's sport development. Kay has demonstrated the stress that supporting a talented child athlete often puts on families.⁵⁰ Parents, coaches, and other interested parties are concerned that an over-emphasis on the child having a 'normal' life may lead to failure to fully develop his/her talent (and miss a chance at the Olympics and/or a career as a highly paid professional athlete); but it is apparent that an over-emphasis on the talent can also lead to a variety of problems from exploitation to burnout. It is precisely this lack of balance that led Donnelly to suggest that Canadian national team athletes were the survivors, rather than the products, of our high-performance development system, and that we had to find a way to stop 'sacrific[ing] children on the altar of international and professional sport success'.⁵¹

Recommendations and Conclusions

The twentieth century was characterized, in part, in the West by increasing concerns about children's rights and child protection. These included restrictions on child labour and the forms of physical punishment that may be applied to children, the recognition of children as a special category under the law and human rights codes, the recognition that adults and the state have a 'duty of care' to the welfare of children, and increasing years of mandatory public education. These are reflected most recently in an increasing 'culture of concern' regarding the safety and supervision of children. We argue that, because of economic and competitive concerns, and because of certain characteristics of the often conservative culture of sport, high performance and professional sport has been out of step with this aspect of social change.

Our analysis of different forms of child labour in sports has emphasized the negative and, in most cases, it is appropriate to emphasize the problems associated with child labour in its various forms. However, it is also important not to overstate the problems, to outline circumstances where there have been successful outcomes, and to develop policies and recommendations that result in even more successful outcomes. For example, while there can be little justification for child labour, the Clean Clothes critique of the Atlanta Agreement noted the following:

- The primary cause of child labour is the poverty of parents, thus children are forced into labour. This is not really taken into account by the [Atlanta Agreement].

- The project as a whole does not properly address the issue – children who don't work for football exporters tend to work in other sectors where working conditions are worse (i.e. brick kilns, and [the manufacture of] surgical instruments).
- The Atlanta Agreement impacts 6–7 thousand working children; there are at least 3.5 million working children in Pakistan (limited approach).⁵²

Responses to child labour need to be clearly planned and implemented. The 1990s consumer boycott of clothes made in Bangladesh, following revelations of children's sweat-shop labour in their manufacture, resulted in a widespread closure of factories and many children attempting to survive on the street, often as sex workers. Although Western consumers may feel that an appropriate response to child labour in the sporting goods industry is to boycott products from offending manufacturers, none of the campaigns noted above call for a boycott. All call for an improvement in working conditions and pay scales, a gradual reduction in the use of child labour, and the provision of education for part-time and former child labourers. NGOs now recognize that sudden changes can harm the children and their families (loss of jobs, loss of income in families that may be surviving at a subsistence level), and that a loss of profits can lead to factories closing, and the problem starting up again somewhere else (which requires campaigns to start all over again). Child labour declined in the developed world 100 years ago, during a time of widespread unemployment, when organized labour and social reformers began to work together – trade unions recognized that the use of inexpensive child labour took jobs away from adults. The organization of adult labour in the developing world is likely to have similar effects.

While it is difficult to think of any justifications for the traffic in children as camel jockeys, there have clearly been successful outcomes from the traffic in children in soccer and other sports. Although some have not been able to sign a contract with a club and may have been abandoned on the streets of a European city, and others have been cheated by their agents and exploited by their clubs, a few have gone on to successful professional careers and have been able to help their families in material ways that would not otherwise have been possible. Similarly, many young people who specialized early in a sport, and participated in a high-performance programme that involved intensive training and competitions, thoroughly enjoyed their experiences and went on to enjoy successful, and sometimes materially rewarding careers.

Although we have treated them as part of a continuum and, although there are clear overlapping concerns, in many ways child labour in the sporting goods industry is quite different from the trafficking of talented young athletes and the labour of children in high-performance sports. For the latter, the problem is: how to nurture the talent of highly talented children without

exploiting or abusing them or, in other words, how we might assure their all-round healthy development. It is understandable that parents wish their children to achieve their fullest potential, and that talented children will also want to realize their fullest potential, and perhaps receive an opportunity for material success that would not otherwise have been available. Coakley and Donnelly have outlined four possible approaches to resolving the dilemmas raised by these ambitions, each with advantages and disadvantages.⁵³ We can treat the problem as: an educational issue; a children's rights issue; a child labour issue; or a child welfare issue.

1. Education: all of the adults involved in the lives of elite child athletes need to be educated about child development, and about maintaining a balance in children's lives. Education is the approach most favoured by sports organizations. It is their response to the widespread criticism of problems in their sports (of which they are well aware), but education is also a response that they are able to control. It slows the pace of any changes, thus allowing the status quo, with which all except the children and their parents are familiar, to continue. Education is a slow process with which to effect social change, and while education is necessary, it does not resolve the problems currently being experienced by many young people at present in the system. Criticism, and the resulting education, has brought about some changes (for example, the Canadian women's gymnastics team now boasts that it is the oldest, tallest, and heaviest team in world competition, and that that is preferable to winning medals with 'anorexic children' and the Athens Olympics suggests that such changes may be spreading to other countries), but more drastic measures may also be necessary. Education is also a key to resolving child labour in the sporting goods industry – educated women tend to have fewer children, and to become more economically independent; educated workers are more likely to organize; and provision of education, even on a part-time basis, to child workers will eventually disrupt a system of child labour that is reproduced because of poverty.
2. Children's rights: a children's rights approach forms a bridge between the educational the legal responses to the problems. Galasso produced one of the first children's rights charters in sport.⁵⁴ He proposed that children in sport should have:
 - the right to self-determination
 - the right to knowledge
 - the right to be protected from abuse
 - the right to try out for a team or position

- the right to have properly qualified instruction and leadership
- the right to be involved in an environment where opportunity for the development of self-respect, and to be treated with respect, is imperative.⁵⁵

While these are not exclusive to high performance sport, enjoyment of these rights would mean that there had been a significant change in the structure of sport at that level. Such charters raise important issues with regard to children's sport, but they only have moral rather than legal standing and are therefore related more to education and political will.

However, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵⁶ does provide a legally binding constraint on signatory governments. The CRC provides a legal means to address violations, and Convention challenges remain an unexplored approach in pursuing children's rights in sport, or children's rights in the sporting goods industry.

3. Child labour: if children's involvement in high performance sport is treated as a child labour issue, the protections invoked by the laws governing workers and the workplace would be available to young athletes. Bart McGuire, CEO of the Women's Tennis Association Tour, acknowledged the concerns about some young professionals: 'If you have both parents who have given up their jobs and are living off the earnings of a player on the tour, the pressure gets to be a concern... Implicit in the relationship is the fact that if you don't practice for a few days, we don't eat.'⁵⁷ Since a number of adults (e.g. coaches, medical staff) may depend on the labour and income of young athletes for their livelihood, they may have more of a vested interest in the athlete's performance than in his / her healthy development. However, while children may be traded as commodities, earn incomes, and play and practice in highly work-like environments, the legal system has been slow to adapt to the rapid changes that have occurred in sport, and this is still an area in which it is possible for authorities to deny that children are working. Thus, there are few protections in the form of limits on training time or the number of competitions, enforcement of the time that athletes devote to compulsory education, securing and investing their incomes, or access to health and safety regulations that govern workers and employers in the workplace. It also appears that such protections are not soon likely to appear. In the entertainment industry (film, television, advertising, dance, music, theatre, and modelling), where it is quite clear that children are workers, such protections for children are beginning to appear as a result of legislation and/or union agreements. Since professional and Olympic sports are arguably part of the entertainment industry, it may be possible to look forward to the day when similar protections are offered to child athletes.

- Certainly, the implementation and enforcement of child labour laws, and workplace health and safety laws in developing nations would go a long way toward resolving the problems in the manufacture of sporting goods.
4. Child welfare: child welfare laws are more discretionary than child labour laws. As Tenebaum noted, ‘When we can reasonably foresee that others will be affected by our actions the law says that we owe them a “duty of care” in terms of how we ought to behave...’.⁵⁸ This ‘duty of care’ is considerably higher for children because of their special need for attention and protection. Child welfare laws are intended to protect children from physical harm, negligence, sexual molestation, emotional harm and abuse; and to ensure that they receive appropriate medical care. All of these protections have been violated in the case of children in high-performance sport. However, the agencies intended to ensure child welfare are usually so overworked with respect to, for example, dysfunctional families, or more overt forms of child abuse, that they are not likely to be eager to investigate complaints involving sport. And, even if child welfare laws exist and are enforced in developing nations, the sporting goods industry would have a relatively low priority when compared to the welfare of children involved in much worse forms of child labour.

Of the four possible approaches to resolving the problems of talented children in sports, only the ‘educational’ approach is currently in play – backed up to some extent by growing criticism of the problems and the moral force of ‘children’s rights’. Perhaps the threat of legal action, internationally as a Convention challenge, or nationally and locally in terms of child labour or child welfare violations, would be enough to speed up the changes being brought about by education. However, that seems unlikely while adults continue to profit from child athletes, and more direct legal action may be necessary. We think that it is probably best not to think of these as choices, but as a four approaches which, if used in combination, may help to alleviate the problems. In the meantime, all of the forms of child labour in sport may be brought to public attention and resolved, at least in part, by a campaign that focused on the corporate social responsibility of both corporations and international sport federations. The regulation of child labour in the sporting goods industry is the responsibility of both governments and corporations. The choice of sporting goods for use, and the selection of sporting goods corporations as sponsors, are responsibilities of international and national sport federations. The regulation of conditions under which children practice and compete, and under which they are bought and sold, is also a responsibility of international and national sport federations, and of umbrella organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

Campaigns such as the current (leading up to Athens 2004) Oxfam coalition's 'Fair Play at the Olympics',⁵⁹ aimed at national Olympic Committees, the IOC, and manufacturers of Olympic clothing who employ sweat-shop labour, provide a model for challenges to all forms of child labour in sports. Corporations who claim to be socially responsible respond to negative publicity about their use of sweat-shop and child labour. Sport federations have rarely been challenged to act responsibly in this way, but a two-pronged effort from socially responsible corporate sponsors and from social activists might begin to have an effect. The IOC has responded, in recent years, to campaigns to bring about greater gender equity at the Olympics, and to campaigns to produce more environmentally responsible Olympics. Child labour in sports could easily be the next campaign.

We think that the government- and corporate-sponsored sports organizations who run high-performance sport development systems need to be able to ensure that children are not treated as commodities, and not exploited; that governments and sport organizations should ensure the education and healthy development of children and adolescents in the sport development systems for the sake of the vast majority who will not become professional players or Olympic athletes; and that NGOs and sport organizations need to focus on the issue of child labour in the sporting goods industry.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented as a keynote address at the 2nd World Congress of Sociology of Sport, Köln: Germany, June 2003.

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), (www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm).
2. UNESCO, *International Charter of Physical Education and Sport* (1978) (www.unesco.org/youth/charter.htm).
3. *World Labour Report* (Geneva: ILO, 1992) p.14.
4. *World Labour Report* (note 3).
5. Cited in the Report by the India Committee of the Netherlands (p.4), *Labour Standards in Sports Good Industry in India – with Special Reference to Child Labour. A Case of Corporate Responsibility*. (New Delhi, July 2000) (www.indianet.nl/tatarep.html).
6. *World Labour Report* (note 3).
7. International Labour Organization. *Red Card to Child Labor: Red Card Campaign* (2002). (www.ilo.org/public/English/standards/ipecc/ratification).
8. P. Donnelly, 'Child Labour, Sport Labour: Applying Child Labour Laws to Sport', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 32/4 (1997) pp.389–406. "... a tale which holdeth children from play:" Exploring negative consequences at both extremes of the physical activity spectrum.' Keynote address delivered at the Annual Meeting of the North American Society for Pediatric Exercise Medicine, Lansing, MI, 1 August, 2002; P. Donnelly, 'Marching out of step: Sport, social order, and the case of child labour.' Keynote address delivered at the 2nd World Congress of Sociology of Sport, Köln, Germany, 19 June, 2003.

9. G. Sage, 'Justice do it! The Nike Transnational Advocacy Network: Organization, Collective Actions, and Outcomes', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 16/3 (1999) pp.206–35. G. Knight and J. Greenberg, 'Promotionalism and Subpolitics: Nike and its Labor Critics', *Management Communication Quarterly* 15/4 (2002) pp.54170.
10. The Atlanta Agreement is cited in numerous sources, including the ILO-IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) document, *IPEC in Action: Asia* (1998) (www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/publ/field/asia/pakist98pr.htm); Christian Aid, *A Sporting Chance: Tackling Child Labour in India's Sports Goods Industry* (1997) (www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9705spor/sportin2.htm).
11. Christian Aid (note 10).
12. Christian Aid (note 10).
13. J. Sugden and A. Tomlinson, personal communication (1999).
14. Christian Aid (note 10).
15. Global March against Child Labour, *Kick Child Labour Out of Soccer* (2002) (www.globalmarch.org).
16. India Committee of the Netherlands, *The Dark Side of Football* (2002) (www.indianet.nl/iv.html). India Committee of the Netherlands, *Labour Standards in Sports Good Industry in India – With Special Reference to Child Labour. A Case of Corporate Responsibility* (New Delhi, July 2000). (www.indianet.nl/tatarep.html).
17. India Committee of the Netherlands (2000) (note 5).
18. Global March Against Child Labour (note 15).
19. CorpWatch, *Football Dreams Stitched with Children's Hands* (Corpwatch Holding Corporations Accountable, 2002) (www.corpwatch.org).
20. Global March Against Child Labour. *European Union to tackle child labour in the sports good industry* (2002). (www.globalmarch.org/clns/clns-15-06-2002.htm).
21. International Labour Organization (note 7).
22. International Labour Organization, (www.ilo.org).
23. United Nations, (www.un.org).
24. Global March, (www.globalmarch.org).
25. Clean Clothes Campaign, Sialkot, Pakistan. *The Football Industry from Child Labour to Workers' Rights* (1999) (www.cleanclothes.org/publications/child_labour.html).
26. Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid, *Trafficking in Women and Children* (2002) (www.lhrla.sdnpk.org/trafficking.html).
27. Anti-Slavery Organization, *The Trafficking of Child Camel Jockeys to the United Arab Emirates (UAE)*. United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, 27th Session (2002) (www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2002-UAE.html).
28. *Trafficking in Migrants Quarterly Bulletin* 23 (2001) 2–3.
29. United Nations Wire, *Pakistan: Authorities Arrest Alleged Agents of Child Camel Jockeys* (2002) (www.unfoundation.org/unwire/2002/07/09/).
30. Anti-Slavery Organization, (www.antislavery.org).
31. Reported by the Anti-Slavery Organization (note 30).
32. United Arab Emirates. Official website (www.uae-pages.com).
33. International Office of Migration, Bangladesh child camel jockey repatriation (2002) (www.iom.int/en.news/phn200802.shtml).
34. L. Krushelnycky, 'Belgium's Football "Slave Trade"', *BBC News World Edition. Crossing Continents*, (10 March 1999).
35. P. Wille, 'Future Policies on Prevention and Trafficking of Human Beings in Europe' (p.5), paper presented at IOM-Conference on Prevention of and fighting against trafficking in human beings with particular focus on enhancing co-operation in the process to enlarge the European Union (2002).
36. Serge Nijki Bodo, a 17-year-old player from the Cameroon, was abandoned by a Belgian club just as his three-month visa ran out. He stated, 'When you're a youngster in Africa, you watch TV, and you see the beautiful soccer stadiums, and you want to wear the football strip like

- the real professional players.' Bodo, who was never paid, found that the contract he signed had been altered to guarantee his agent 50 per cent of his earnings. L. Krushelnycky (note 34).
37. International Office of Migration (note 33) p.41.
 38. See L. Krushelnycky (note 34).
 39. J. Sopol, 'Football "Slave Trade"', *BBC News* (14 February 2000) (www.peacelink.it/anb-bia/week_2k/2k02224a).
 40. *The Strait Times Interactive*, 'In Soccer Bondage' (24 December 2000) (<http://straitstimes.asial.com...g/mnt/html/preiership/news-dec-22.html>).
 41. R. Hughes, 'Nobody Blinks at the Plundering of Tender Young Talent', *International Herald Tribune* (2000) www.iht.com/IHT/RH/rh090299.html
 42. B. Kidd and J. Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey* (Toronto, ON: New Press, 1972).
 43. *Ibid.* p.56.
 44. Parts of this and the following sections are adapted from J. Coakley and P. Donnelly, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 1st Canadian edition. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2004).
 45. Robidoux makes this case most explicitly in his analysis of 'farm systems' for the highest level professional sports teams. M. Robidoux, *Men at Work. A Working Understanding of Professional Hockey* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).
 46. H. Cantelon, 'High Performance Sport and the Child Athlete: Learning to Labour', in A. Ingham and E. Broom (eds.) *Career Patterns and Career Contingencies in Sport* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1981).
 47. O. Grupe, 'Top Level Sport for Children From an Educational Viewpoint', *International Journal for Physical Education* 22/1 (1985) pp.10–11.
 48. P. Donnelly, Problems Associated with Youth Involvement in High Performance Sport in B. Cahill and A. Pearl (eds.), *Intensive Participation in Children's Sports* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1993).
 49. P. Donnelly (1997) (note 8).
 50. T. Kay, 'Sporting Excellence: A Family Affair?' *European Physical Education Review* 6/2 (2000) pp.151–69.
 51. P. Donnelly (note 48) p.120.
 52. Clean Clothes Campaign (note 25).
 53. J. Coakley and P. Donnelly *Sports in Society* (note 44).
 54. P. Galasso, *Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity* (Toronto:Ontario Scholars Press, 1998).
 55. *Ibid.*, pp.334–36.
 56. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)
 57. S. Brunt, Unlike Other Games, 'Women's Tennis is Child's Play', *Globe and Mail* (18 August 1999) p.S1.
 58. K. Tenebaum, Daunted Spirits, Mangled Bodies: Children in High Performance Sport (unpublished paper, McMaster University, 1996) p.25.
 59. See Oxfam, *Fair Play at the Olympics* (www.fairolympics.org)