110 - MODIFICATIONS IN SPORTS RULES: THE CASE OF VOLLEYBALL AND MEDIA

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Introduction

We consider that as long as a sport is invented and it becomes popular, it passes by many modifications along the time. During this evolution it is natural that the older the sport, the most alterations and modifications in its structure it tends to pass by, in order to become more interesting for its practitioners. However, the effective changes are those that make that the sport reaches its mature form, where the generated excitement occurs next to the end of the match (Elias & Dunning, 1992).

These changes also occurred within volleyball and succeeded in making the game most dynamic and pleasant for the spectators, attracting a larger attendance and a greater number of practitioners. Today it became the second more practiced sport in Brazil, losing only to soccer. In our research we demonstrate that when many changes occur in a small space of time, greater is the difficulty of the public to assimilate the rules. However, we consider that the media has a basic role in the process of dissemination, adoption and alteration of the rules of any given sport. However it has limits in this influence and it is clear that we cannot make the media responsible for the success or failure of a sport, coexisting also in this relation the players and the sponsors, thus forming a species of triangulation balanced between the human resources and the financial capital.

It is during the decade of 1980 that volleyball gains strength as a popular sport in Brazil, and its games start to have their transmission carried through by commercial television. In parallel, the volume of financial investment granted by companies to permit the association of their brands to the development of the game was still in maturation but already showing signs of growth (Pozzi & Ribeiro, 2004).

But how to adapt a game such as volleyball to suit the interest of the sports media?

We consider that it is during the two last decades that sports like volleyball have modified substantially their rules, making them more dynamic, quicker, aiming to make them more appealing either for those who come to the stadium as well as for those who watch on the television.

In the next pages we present the modifications carried through within this sport and match them with the opinion of professionals who are directly implicated with the game.

The development of volleyball: a short history of its creation until the current days

The Volley was created in 1895 by American William G. Morgan, then manager of physical education of the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) in the city of Holyoke, Massachusetts, United States. The first name of this game that would become one of the major sports in the world was minnonette. Quickly the game gained popularity and grew world-wide and in 1900 it arrived in Canada (first country after the United States), then later developed in other countries, as China, Japan (1908), Philippines (1910) and Mexico among other European, Asian, African and South American countries. The first ball that was used to play "minnonette" was very heavy, so Morgan asked a firm to manufacture a ball specially for the game he had created. In Springfield, Dr A.T. Halstead suggested that its name was changed to volleyball since the game was played with the hands.

We can mention, in chronological order the most important changes in the rules as follow:

1921 - A line is traced under the net having divided the field of game in 2 equal halves.

1937 - Multiple contacts with the ball are allowed particularly in defenses proceeding from "violent" attacks.

Decade of 1940

The ball can be touched with any part of the body above of the knee; after the War the rules were rewritten in a clearer way, to be more easily interpreted. This change occurred mainly in the following items: a) a better definition was given to the notion of blockade; b) the serve was limited to an area of 3 meters from the back, each player keeping his position during the serve; simultaneous contacts of 2 players will be considered as only 1 touch; c) the interval between sets is set at 3 minutes; d) the time requested by the coach is changed into 1 minute.

Decade of 1950

Thoughts were given to the addition of a second referee; the "curtain" during the serve was forbidden and the invasion of the opponent's side was limited to the foot that exceeded fully the central line.

Decade of 1960

Invasion over the net during the blockade is forbidden, while the blockers are allowed a second touch after the touch made during the action of blockade; the use of antennas for the delimitation of the airspace of the courts was recommended, thus helping to delimit the airspace of crossing balls to the adversary side.

Decade of 1970

The change of the height of the antennas (passing from 9,4m to 9m) and 3 touches after the blockade started to be allowed.

Decade of 1980

Beginning of transmissions of volleyball matches; the ball pressure is modified from 0,40 to 0,46 kg/cm2; the blockade of serves is forbidden after the Los Angeles Olympic Games. The referees are instructed to be more permissive with the defense; the Rally-point System was adopted for the fifth set, where each booty is equivalent 1 point. The punctuation of each set is limited to a maximum of 17 points with the difference of 1 point between the teams; when the set is tied up to 16-16 the game will continue until a team gets 2 points of advantage; new rules were approved to be introduced in 01/01/1995; the ball could be touched with any part of the body (the feet included); the serve zone will extend for all the back line.

Decade of 1990

A ball that has been shot at the opponent's free zone from outside of the airspace delimitation could be recovered. Hands can reach to the other team's court as long as they do not bypass entirely the central line. The disciplinary sanctions start to be valid for the duration of the game. The attack line will have a prolongation of 1,75m with drawn lines of 15cm with 20cm of spacing. Reduction of the ball pressure (0,30 - 0,325 kg/cm22); the pressure of the ball was modified to allow a bigger absorption in the reception thus allowing a smoother sequence of the play; the adoption of the *Rally-point System* started to be tested with 25 points in the four first sets and *15 points in the tie-break* during next the 2 years. Other changes were adopted immediately: the change of the color of the ball, the introduction of the “libero” and more freedom to the coaches to pass instructions (between the attack line and the back of the court).

From 2000 to 2005

A new rule is tested in relation to the "imprisoned ball" in the dispute between contending players in the net. Studies of the FIVB (International Federation of Volleyball) disclose a small growth; the FIVB approved, in the September meeting of the Commission of Arbitration with the Commission of Game Laws in Lausanne, Switzerland, three alterations in the rule to be tested in next year competitions. **a)** the first change will be the restriction of the displacement of the coaches during the games. In the competition, there will be a line delimiting the range of action of the coaches. This new line will be at 1,75m off the lateral lines of the courts, in the space between the dotted line, which is the continuation of the attack line (3m), until the bottom line; **b)** The second change will be the positioning of the line referees. Two line referees will be placed diagonally in the court and two more in front of the

attack line, of the side where is placed the chair of the first referee. "The objective, according to FIVB, will be to improve the observation of attacks from the back", explained Josebel Palmeirim, president of COBRAV (Brazilian Commission of Arbitration) and member of the Commission of Arbitration of the FIVB. **c)** The third alteration will be in relation with the actions of the coaches. When one trainer complains about the referees decisions with the members of the arbitration commission or with the game officials, these will be able to raise the arm to signal to the first referee to punish the trainer with a yellow card.

Analysis of the interviews

After this short description, we will analyze in the next pages the pronouncements of some professionals of the sport who work directly with volleyball. We had as intentional sample two professionals of physical education who are active in volleyball for more than two decades. One of them acts as coach and the other as referee of the CBV. We consider these professionals as elite informants since they are continuously same ones act of continuous involved with the sport, with competing teams and they are live witnesses of the applicability and functionality of the rules.

Additionally, in the two last decades these informants were active participants in the recent history of the sport. Either understanding and adjusting to the modifications in the rules as athletes and later, with their students and athletes. Therefore, the interviewees end up issuing pronouncements as someone who lives volleyball as a discursive community (Foulcault, 1996; Maingueneau, 1997) where the identity sense is gained from the experience with the sport.

We develop here the concept of **sportive tribe**, constructed from the concepts of identity (Castells, 1999) and auto-identity (Giddens, 2002) where the individuals, when involved with a sport, tend, from their preferences and personal stories, to become part of a specific sportive subculture (Giulianotti, 1999), either in the admiration of their idols, in the style of worn clothes and their circle of frequentation. In regard to the personal objectives, them they tend to go along the objectives of their peers inside the sporting world they belong to, either in climbing a specific mountain, playing in a certain stadium, participating in a particular competition.

In this sense, we understand that the informants who were intentionally chosen here share the same sporting tribe, insofar as their personal story and profession go. They have played, trained and shared with their generation precise moments that made them known for the sport they have practiced.

Customarily, the informants perceive that currently volleyball undergoes a "boom" (both interviewees used the same word), or rather, that volleyball counts at the moment with a great force for its dissemination: the sports media. But that in the past the situation was not the same at all, and it was thanks to the television transmissions that volleyball started to develop much faster.

In our paper we divide the pronouncements of our informants in two distinct, but complementary categories to allow us understand the evolution undergone by this sport.

It is necessary to remark that the analyses developed here are part of a single axle of interpretation. The concept of mediatization of the sport developed for Blain & O'Donnell (2000). According to the authors we can define mediatization as "*A major new phase of the development of many sports, arguably of sport generally, was inaugurated with the television age and now sport culture and media culture are for many sports fans, and media consumers, closely related*". Blain & O'Donnell, 2000, p. 1).

Therefore, the modifications in the rules, the aesthetics and the equilibrium of the teams follow the objective of adapting as best as possible to the programming schedules defined by the media for television, in the formation of a sports culture oriented to the public who watches from home (and not at gymnasia and stadiums) and consumes on products offered by the sports industry (Ribeiro, 2005).

a) When the rules are changed: the sense of aesthetics

Any human being activity has its inherent positive and negative aspects. In the case of the alterations in the rules of volleyball, these aim to make the sport more attractive in the aesthetics aspect. Or rather, the alterations when they lead to a "prettier game" are positive for volleyball. On the contrary, when alterations make the game duller or conduct to the appearance of controversial situations, these rules tend to disappear. We also know that all modifications in the rules also depends on a period of adaptation and when "they have been approved" by players, coaches, the public and the media they end up remaining. In the words of the informants:

"*A change that made volleyball **prettier** was the introduction of midfield players, who are typically taller and therefore have higher capacity to play in the defense and make passes, defend difficult balls, recouping difficult serves; he makes more interesting passes and a more **creative** play*".

Our underscore (Informant no.2)

"*The role of "libero" was introduced in order to defend against the more violent serves coming from the taller players; the taller players have the classical feedback problem of catching up a returning ball due to their height and difficulty of locomotion. A shorter athlete moves with greater ease. Thus "liberos" were introduced to allow better continuity to the play, since **what the audience cheers the most is the ball in the air, the rally***".

Our underscore (Informant no.1)

The aesthetic sense of the game and its plasticity for those who watch are essential components of the evolution of any sport. The more that entertainment accounts for a greater share of our lives, we need to watch spectacles that capture our attention and sports in our society have been assiduous participants in this phenomenon.

In the case of volleyball, it is the introduction of specialist roles within the game (midfielder and libero) that contribute to make the game more dynamic and that new plays can be carried through, in the measure where the ball starts to be more time in game. Moreover the function of libero helped admit players of medium stature, considered too short for the practice of the game, but who were used to advantage in the back of the court. We consider this a very positive measure, rallying the support of the majority of the population and therefore popularizing the sport.

b) The balance of the game

The beauty of the game is fruit of modifications that were introduced along the time and have been carried through so that a balance between players of defense and attack exists and that all the teams have the possibility to revert a possible defeat in a few minutes. According to Elias & Dunning (1992) a sport reaches its maturity when the established rules that govern the defensive and offensive systems reach a balance, so that the result of a match is known only in its final phase (Elias & Dunning, 1992).

According to our informants:

"***From the moment that the rally system of points was introduced** teams who did not possess the same level of proficiency tended to level off leading to a situation where no team can easily win against another*". (Informant no.2)

"***the change in the punctuation took some 5 years for the teams to get used to** and the end of the principle of advantage made the athlete more attentive than before, since in the past players knew they could change the score at any moment due to the advantage factor, which does not apply anymore in our days and therefore today everything goes faster and we have to adapt and to adapt our athletes*".

(Informant no.1)

The system of punctuation in the form of tie-break for a complete match of volleyball was introduced in the beginning of the 90'sand contributed to make the matches in general of a shorter duration and that the game's internal logic be modified (Parlebas, 1988). For the coaches it was necessary to teach to the players not to waste any play, since any error of a team lead to the other one to receive a point. It is clear that we are talking of only one sport, volleyball. But to compare volleyball of last decades or even that of a few years behind with current volleyball seems to us entirely inadequate. We do mean that the changes introduced to the game made it evolve into an entirely different direction. In consequence, to compare different generations of players, for example, seems highly inadequate in the case of this sport activity.

Conclusion

As we argue, the rules of volleyball have been modified along the time. We strive to understand how the un-sportive process introduced in the games (Elias & Dunning, 1992) is still considered today as dynamic and innovative. Moreover, it is necessary to count with the concept of sport mediatization (Blain & O'Donnell, 2000) which offers us subsidies for the analyses on the influence of the sports media in the evolution and development to them of present-day sports. We consider that many sports have tried to modify their rules, even the more traditional ones, in the same fashion volleyball has made. Ulterior studies may disclose how other sports, through their own organizations and managers, have adapted to the requirements of the media, the public and the sponsors without, in despite of all, sacrificing their basic fundaments. From minnonette introduced in 1895 to the present voleyball. From whatever will come in the future as alterations of the rules.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relation between the development of sports and the role of the sports media. As example we will use the specific case of volleyball. We consider that the changes carried through the last years have had, initially, the potential to attract the general public and consequently ended up attracting the media for its divulgation. The minnonette appeared in 1895 with William Morgan and in 1896 already had its first change in name for the sport that today we know as volleyball. Since then they had been innumerable changes, until the present state of things, which still presents itself propitious for newer changes in its rules. We will use in our research the writings of Elias & Dunning (1992) to consider the questions concerning the development of the sports along the last decades, as well as the works of Parlebas (1998) on the sociology of the sport. For the relation of the sport with the media, we use the studies of Pozzi & Ribeiro (2004). Our research is of a qualitative nature, where we analyze the points-of-view of professionals involved in this sport.

MODIFICATIONS DANS LES RÈGLES DES SPORTS: LE CAS DU VOLLEYBALL AVEC LE MÉDIA

RESUMÉ

L'objet de cette recherche est de mener une enquête sur la relation entre l'évolution des sports et le rôle du média sportif. Nous avons choisi le volleyball comme notre cas d'étude.

Nous considérons que les changements des dernières années ont eu le potentiel d'attirer le grand public dans un premier temps et par la suite ces changements ont abouti à attirer les média pour sa diffusion.

La monnonette est apparue en 1895 avec William Morgan, sa première évolution en 1896 avec l'adoption du nom volleyball tel qu'on connaît aujourd'hui. Plusieurs autres modifications ont été apportées jusqu'à nos jours. L'état actuel du sport est encore propice à des nouveaux changements dans ses règles. Pour des fins de recherche, nous utiliserons les travaux d'Elias & Dunning (1992) pour couvrir les questions sur l'évolution des sports au cours des dernières décennies, aussi l'œuvre de Parlebas (1998) sur la sociologie du sport.

Pour les relations sport / média nous nous appuierons sur les études de Pozzi & Ribeiro (2004). Notre recherche est de nature qualitative, où nous analyserons les propos des professionnels concernés par le volleyball.

MODIFICACIONES EN REGLAS DE LOS DEPORTES: ESTUDIO DE CASO EL VOLEIBOL DEL Y LOS MEDIOS

RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta pesquisa es investigar la relación entre el desarrollo de los deportes y el papel de los medios de comunicación deportivos en ese contexto. Como ejemplo utilizaremos el caso específico del voleibol. Consideramos que los cambios realizados en los últimos años tienen, en un primer momento, la posibilidad de atraer el gran público y consecuentemente llamar la atención de los medios de comunicación para su propaganda. El minnonette surgió en 1895 con William G. Morgan y en 1896, ya tuvo su primera transformación para el nombre que hoy conocemos como voleibol. Desde entonces hubo incontables cambios, hasta la práctica actual, la cual todavía se presenta propicia para nuevas transformaciones en sus reglas. Vamos a utilizar en nuestra investigación los escritos de Elias & Dunning (1992) para pensar las cuestiones acerca del desarrollo de los deportes a lo largo de las últimas décadas, así como la obra de Parlebas (1998) sobre la sociología del deporte. Cuanto a la relación entre el deporte y los medios de comunicación, utilizamos las consideraciones de Pozzi & Ribeiro (2004). Nuestra pesquisa es de naturaleza cualitativa, en la cual analizamos el discurso de profesionales comprometidos con este deporte.

MODIFICAçõES NAS REGRAS DOS ESPORTES: O CASO DO VOLEIBOL COM A MíDIA

RESUMO

O objetivo dessa pesquisa é investigar a relação entre o desenvolvimento dos esportes e o papel da mídia esportiva nesse contexto. Como exemplo utilizaremos o caso específico do voleibol. Consideramos que as mudanças realizadas nos últimos anos tem, em um primeiro momento, a possibilidade de atrair o grande público e conseqüentemente acabam por atrair a mídia para a sua propagação. O minnonette surgiu em 1895 com o William Morgan e em 1896, já teve sua primeira mudança para o nome que hoje conhecemos como voleibol. De lá para cá foram inúmeras mudanças, até o estágio atual, que ainda se apresenta propício para novas mudanças em suas regras. Utilizaremos em nossa pesquisa os escrito de Elias & Dunning (1992) para considerarmos as questões acerca do desenvolvimento dos esportes ao longo das últimas décadas, bem como a obra de Parlebas (1998) sobre a sociologia do esporte. Para a relação do esporte com a mídia, utilizamos as considerações de Pozzi & Ribeiro (2004). Nossa pesquisa é de natureza qualitativa, onde analisamos o discurso de profissionais envolvidos nesse esporte.