

SPORTING SUPEREROGATION AND WHY IT MATTERS

Abstract: A commonly accepted feature of commonsense morality is that there are some acts that are supererogatory or beyond the call of duty. Recently, philosophers have begun to ask whether something like supererogation might exist in other normative domains such as epistemology and aesthetics. In this paper I will argue that there is good reason to think that sporting supererogation exists. I will then argue that recognizing the existence of sporting supererogation is important because it highlights the value of sport as a mutual pursuit of excellence and reinforces the value of sportsmanship.

Key Words: Philosophy of Sport; Sporting Obligations; Fair Play; Sportsmanship; Supererogation

Introduction

The Premier League clash between Arsenal and Liverpool on the 24th of March 1997 was an exciting, tense and eventful match. The match was important for many reasons, not least of which being that Arsenal's eventual 1-2 defeat at home to one of their title rivals signaled for many of their fans the end of their title aspirations. More interestingly though, at least for sports ethicists and philosophers of sport, was an incident that occurred in the 64th minute that led eventually to Liverpool's second goal. Liverpool's Mark Wright played a long ball forward from the heart of Liverpool's defence that bypassed the midfield and caught the Arsenal defence out of position. The Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler ran onto the ball and was left with only Arsenal goalkeeper David Seaman to beat. Fowler attempted to dribble past the on-coming Seaman but as he did so Fowler fell dramatically to the ground. The referee judged that Seaman had fouled Fowler and awarded a penalty to Liverpool. Fowler responded by trying to persuade the referee

to change his mind, claiming that Seaman had not made contact with him and so no foul had been committed. The referee, though, refused to change his mind. Fowler's penalty was then saved by Seaman but Liverpool's Jason McAteer scored the rebound.¹ Fowler was roundly praised for his sportsmanship and received a special commendation from UEFA, the governing body of European football, in recognition of his behaviour.

One of the interesting features of Fowler's case is that although he was highly praised for acting as he did, it seems unlikely that he would have been blamed had he quietly accepted the penalty. Very few of the players who benefit from the many important mistakes that football referees make each season make an attempt to alter the decision. While those who deliberately try to deceive referees are criticized by supporters, pundits, coaches and their fellow players, those who choose not to point out refereeing mistakes seldom are. This may seem puzzling. If what Fowler did was right, then wouldn't it be wrong to simply say nothing in such a case? If this really is how one ought to behave in such cases then why do players who quietly accept such penalties escape our criticism?

In this paper, I will argue that cases like Fowler's give us good reason to accept the existence of acts of sporting supererogation. A commonly accepted feature of commonsense morality is that there are some acts that are supererogatory or beyond the call of duty. Recently, philosophers have begun to ask whether something like supererogation might exist in other normative domains such as epistemology (eg. Hedberg 2014; McElwee 2017a) and prudence (McElwee 2017a). However, despite the rich and growing literature on sportsmanship (eg. Arnold 1983; Feezell 1986; Keating 1964; Simon et al 2014 Ch. 3) up to now there has been almost no investigation into whether there are distinctly sporting cases of supererogation.² I will

argue that there are such cases and that recognizing their existence is important because it helps to highlight the value of sport as a mutual pursuit of excellence and to reinforce the value of sportsmanship.

I will start, in Section One, by giving a brief overview of the concept of supererogation and the reasons for accepting the existence of acts of supererogation in the moral domain. I will then, in Section Two, argue that there are also good reasons to think that acts of sporting supererogation exist. I will finish, in Section Three, by explaining why recognizing the category of sporting supererogation is important.

1. Moral Obligation and Supererogation

In 2007 Cameron Hellowater, a twenty year old student, collapsed at a Subway station in New York and fell onto the tracks as an oncoming train approached the station. A fellow passenger, named Wesley Autrey, jumped onto the tracks and held the man down as the train came to a stop above their heads, saving the man's life. Autrey's act was praised by many and he received a bronze medallion award from the Mayor of New York, the city's highest award for exceptional citizenship. However, despite the importance of Autrey's act and its clear moral value, most people would be unlikely to say that Autrey was required to act as he did. Instead, Autrey's act of heroism seems to be rightly described as being beyond the call of duty or supererogatory.

J. O. Urmson (1958) began the contemporary discussion of acts of supererogation by arguing that such acts exist and that this has important consequences for moral philosophy. Urmson argued that acts like Autrey's are clearly morally good but could not be reasonably demanded of

people. Moreover, it would be inappropriate to blame those who fail to perform such acts. This gives us two reasons for thinking that Autrey's act cannot be morally required. The first is that moral requirements are conceptually tied to demands. When an act is morally required it is legitimate to demand that people perform it. As John Stuart Mill puts the point: 'It is part of the notion of duty in every one of its forms that a person may rightfully be compelled to fulfill it,' (Mill 1993, 193). Given this link between moral requirements and demands, the fact that we could not legitimately demand that someone acts as Autrey did gives us good reason to think that it was not morally required. The second reason is that moral obligations are also thought to be conceptually linked to blame. Someone who violates a moral requirement without a good excuse is blameworthy for her action. As Stephen Darwall puts the point, 'It is a conceptual truth that an act is morally wrong, if, and only if, it is blameworthy if done without an excuse,' (Darwall 2013, 21). If we accept that moral requirements and blameworthiness are linked in this way and we think that it would have been inappropriate to blame Autrey had he acted otherwise then we should also accept that Autrey's act was not morally required.

Urmson's argument provides good reason to think that although Autrey's act was clearly morally good it was not morally required. This serves as a useful starting point for how we should characterize supererogatory acts. The etymology of the term comes from the latin *super-erogare* which means to pay out more than is due (Heyd 2015). The term comes from the Roman Catholic religious tradition, in which it refers to meritorious acts that go beyond what is required.³ In moral philosophy the term is used to pick out acts that go beyond what is required by duty. The basic features of such acts is that they are morally good but not morally required. However, since Urmson's discussion, a number of philosophers have sought to give a more

precise account of supererogation. While there is no complete consensus on this issue, the following is accepted as a fairly standard account of supererogation:

Moral Supererogation: An act is supererogatory if and only if:

- a) It is morally optional (neither morally required nor morally forbidden).⁴
- b) It is morally better than the minimum that morality demands.⁵

This way of understanding moral supererogation provides two conditions that must be met in order for any given normative domain to include acts of supererogation. In order for a given normative domain to have acts that are better than the minimum demanded, that domain must demand or require that certain acts be performed. Moreover, it must allow that it is possible to surpass these demands. In summary, the following conditions must be met:

Supererogation in a Domain: A given normative domain includes acts of supererogation if and only if:

- a) That normative domain generates requirements.
- b) It is possible to perform acts that are both permissible (according to the given normative domain) and better (according to the given normative domain) than the acts that are required by that domain.⁶

This means that in order for there to be cases of sporting supererogation, the following conditions must be met:

Sporting Supererogation: The domain of sport includes acts of sporting supererogation if and only if:

- a) Sport generates requirements.

- b) It is possible to perform acts that are both permissible (according to the domain of sport) and better (according to the domain of sport) than the acts that are required by sport.

In the next section I will argue that there is good reason to think that both of these conditions are met.

2. Sporting Obligation and Supererogation

Before I begin my argument, I first want to distinguish the claim that I will defend from a weaker and less interesting claim. The claim that acts of sporting supererogation exist could be thought to simply mean that acts of moral supererogation exist on the sports field. As has been pointed out by Peter J. Arnold (1983, 67-68) and Sigmund Loland (2002, 32), there is good reason to think that such acts exist. Arnold gives the example of a marathon runner who comes to the aid of a fellow runner who is in a state of distress and in doing so sacrifices her own chances of gaining a medal. One recent example of this kind of act can be found the 5000 Meter race in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. During the heat, New Zealander Nikki Hamblin tripped and fell and fellow runner Abbey D'Agostino was caught up in the Hamblin's fall and also fell to the ground. D'Agostino got up straight away, while Hamblin continued to lie on the ground. Rather than running ahead, D'Agostino stayed to help Hamblin to her feet. As the pair began to run again it became clear that D'Agostino had injured her leg in the fall. Hamblin stayed to help D'Agostino to her feet so that she could finish the race. Both athletes were awarded the International Fair Play Committee Award by the International Olympic Committee. Both cases are morally praiseworthy but, we might think, go beyond what we could morally demand of

athletes in these positions.⁷ This seems like a clear case of moral supererogation in a sporting context.

However, the claim that such acts of moral supererogation in a sporting context exist does not seem to be a particularly philosophically interesting observation. Acts of supererogation can occur in all sorts of situation so why not on the sports field? The more interesting claim that I want to defend is that there are acts that are better from the *sporting* point of view than what is required from the sporting point of view. Before I can make this case though I must first explain the nature of sport and why we might think it is plausible to think that there are distinctly sporting forms of obligation.

The starting point for thinking about the nature of sport is the account offered by Bernard Suits' in *The Grasshopper* (2005). According to Suits, sports are a subclass of games that involve physical skill, exertion, prowess etc. Suits (2005, 54-55) then defines playing a game in the following way:

To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [preludory goal], using only means permitted by rules [lusory means], where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means [constitutive rules], and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude].

A football player, for example, has a pre-game goal (put the ball in the net) and accepts constraints on how to achieve this goal (the rules of football). Similarly, a golf player has a goal of putting a golf ball in a hole and accepts the constraint that she can only do so by hitting the ball using certain kinds of clubs. These constraints make it more difficult than it otherwise would be.

Suits' analysis is not immune to challenges but I will not explore these here as my focus is not primarily in providing an account of sport.⁸

What is the purpose then of engaging in sporting activity? Why do we accept the constraints imposed by the constitutive rules when we know they make it more difficult to achieve our pre-lusory aims? The answer is that these constraints are accepted because they present us with the challenges that transform otherwise easy tasks (putting a ball into a net) into an interesting activity. It is these constraints that make the sport an activity worth pursuing. These challenges may be deemed valuable either intrinsically or instrumentally. We may simply enjoy challenging ourselves for its own sake. In addition by setting ourselves these challenges we attempt to push ourselves to the limits of our physical and mental capabilities. This according to Simon et al. (2014, 47), allows us to, 'Learn about ourselves and others through the attempt to meet the competitive test.' These challenges enable us to learn about the relative athletic abilities of ourselves and others (Loland 2002, 10). The challenges play an epistemic role then, in informing us of what we are capable of achieving. We might also think, as Stephen Mumford does (2010 p.47), that these challenges can be viewed as 'contests of virtue', that play a useful role in moral education.⁹ The purpose of placing constraints on how we are to achieve certain tasks (like putting a ball in a net or a golf ball in a hole) is that this is what makes these valuable challenges possible.

The constitutive rules of a game are important then because they enable these valuable challenges. In order to ensure that these challenges occur though, it is not enough that we create these rules. We must also ensure that they are followed. The challenge posed by the game of golf would not exist if players felt free to move their golf balls with their hands during play.¹⁰ If this

were the case then players would no longer be setting themselves challenges that push them to their physical limits and, as a result, would receive none of the epistemic or moral benefits that have been claimed for such challenges. Given how important it is that these constitutive rules are followed, officials are introduced to ensure the rules are adhered to and that where they are broken, penalties are imposed. We might think that playing a game fairly involves nothing more than respecting these rules. However, as well as formal constitutive rules sports are also governed by more informal norms. For example, in football it is customary to kick the ball out of play when a player on the opposing team is injured. Similarly, when a team has kicked the ball out of play for this reason it is customary for the opposing team to return possession to them when the game restarts. These norms also help to make the challenges of sport possible. Those who break such norms are heavily criticized by opponents, spectators and even fellow team mates.¹¹

Given the importance of both the formal rules and informal norms in creating the valuable challenges of sport, it is no surprise that respecting these norms is thought to be an important part of the virtue of sportsmanship.¹² In addition to being relevant to virtue, these norms have also been claimed to generate obligations. Loland (2002, 33) for example, claims that ‘norms for sport competition have the status of obligations that obtain when we voluntarily engage in rule-governed practices.’ According to this line of thought, sporting participants have an obligation to follow both the formal and informal norms of sport.

We might think that these obligations are simply moral obligations that occur in a sporting context. Given that following these norms is important for creating valuable challenges, it seems reasonable to think that we can reasonably morally demand that people who participate in sport act in these ways. Moreover, we are likely to morally blame sports men and women who

violate these norms. Given the conceptual link between moral obligations and the legitimacy of moral demands and blame this gives us good reason to think that these norms do generate moral obligations.

However, there is also good reason to think that moral obligations are not the only form of obligations that exist in this case. The reason this is plausible is the distinct sporting-specific criticism we level at people who violate these norms. While it is true that we may sometimes respond to the violations of these norms with traditional moral disapproval, we are much more likely to respond by saying this is *unsporting* behaviour or *unsportsmanlike*. We might call this kind of censure sporting disapproval. Take for example, the case of Diego Maradona's handball goal for Argentina in the 1986 World Cup. Or similarly, Thierry Henry's handball in the buildup to William Gallas' winning goal for France against Ireland to qualify for the 2010 football world cup. In both cases the players were deemed blameworthy for deliberately committing a handball in the build up to the goal.¹³ The primary response to these goals was not to brand these actions as *immoral* but to claim that Maradona and Henry's actions were *unsporting*.¹⁴ This distinct kind of censure gives us some reason to think that the obligations we have to comply with sporting norms are not fully reducible to moral obligations.¹⁵

Some may resist this claim. It could be thought that although we have distinct kinds of censure for those who fail to comply with sporting norms, this does not yet show these are a fully separate class of obligation.¹⁶ Instead it could be suggested that the obligations generated by sporting norms are just an interesting form of moral obligation for which a distinctive form of censure is appropriate. For the purposes of my argument however, this way of understanding these obligations will suffice. In order to make my argument, it is enough to accept that sporting

obligations are in some way distinct from other kinds of moral obligation. We can accept this claim whether we think sporting obligations are different from moral obligations or if we think that they just from a distinct subclass of moral obligations.

Not only do there seem to be distinctly sporting obligations but it also seems possible to go beyond these obligations from the sporting point of view. Take the example of Robbie Fowler telling the referee not to award his team a penalty with which I began this paper. Fowler was widely praised for his actions and even received a special reward from UEFA in recognition of his sporting behaviour. The reason Fowler's act is praiseworthy from the sporting point of view is that the gaining of an undeserved penalty distorts the sporting competition. The result that follows from such a match will tell us less about the relative sporting abilities of the two teams. It is preferable from the sporting point of view then for a result not to be determined in this way. However, most footballers and football fans would not regard Fowler's behaviour as required. While it is generally considered wrong in football to deliberately mislead a referee through diving or simulation, it is not considered wrong to take advantage of refereeing mistakes (though these norms are different in other sports). We can see this from the fact that those who take advantage of such mistakes are unlikely to receive criticism from fans or their fellow players. It seems highly unlikely for example, that Fowler would have been widely criticized had he simply accepted the referee's decision. Fowler's act was not required from the sporting point of view and was better from that point of view than other permissible actions. In other words, Fowler's action is a clear example of an act of sporting supererogation.

Another plausible case of sporting supererogation can be found in a high school state track competition that took place in Washington state in 2008. This case is outlined by Simon et al. (2014, 73-74) in the following:

A senior, Nicole Cochran, thought she had won the girl's 3,200-meter title but was disqualified by a highly questionable call by an official, who ruled she had stepped outside her lane once during the race. According to reports of the incident, even her competitors thought the judge had made an egregious error, and a video of the race later confirmed the error. As a result of the disqualification the winner was sophomore Amanda Nelson of Spokane, who had finished second but was moved up to first as a result of disqualification. Nelson, however, thought this decision was unacceptable. As Nelson said, 'It wasn't fair. She deserved it. She totally crushed everybody.' So when Nelson received the medal she left the podium and placed the first-place medal around the neck of the person she regarded as the rightful winner, Cochran. Moreover, the other girls who placed all did the same thing, removing their medals and placing them around the neck of the runner who would have been placed ahead of them if Cochran had not been disqualified.

Like Fowler, Nelson believed that she had wrongly benefitted from a mistaken decision from an official. Again it seems plausible to think that Nelson would not have been subject to criticism if she not acted in this way. Nevertheless, Nelson's act seems highly praiseworthy from the sporting point of view, as it meant that the medals were received on a basis that more accurately reflected the relative sporting merits of the participants. For these reasons, this also seems like a plausible case of sporting supererogation.

It is worth noting that cases of sporting supererogation do not only occur in the correction of refereeing decisions. Consider the following example: West Ham's Premier League match against Everton on the 16th of December 2000 was tied at one each when Everton's goalkeeper Paul Gerrard went down injured on the edge of his own box. Just as Gerrard was collapsing, West Ham's Trevor Sinclair delivered a cross into striker Paolo Di Canio, who would have been given an easy chance to give West Ham the lead. Instead Di Canio decided to catch the ball in his hands in order to stop play to allow Gerrard to receive treatment. Di Canio was widely praised for this and received the Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) annual fair play award. The rationale behind this award seems clear. Gerrard's injury presented Di Canio with a clear chance to score. If Di Canio had taken this chance then the result would have been decided not on the basis of sporting merits but on an unfortunately timed injury. From the sporting point of view then, it seems praiseworthy for Di Canio to act as he did. Again though, it seems unlikely that Di Canio would have been criticized by many had he decided to shoot at goal. Perhaps because it is quite rare in football for a goalkeeper to have an off the ball injury shortly before an opponent is presented with a goal-scoring opportunity, there are no norms that dictate that players should stop play in such cases. This seems like another plausible candidate then for a case of sporting supererogation.

Another source of sporting supererogation is in the duty to try hard in sports.¹⁷ As Jeffrey Fry (2011) has argued, although this is often viewed as a duty to try *one's hardest*, it is more plausible to think that the duty is to *try hard* rather than to achieve perfect levels of effort. For example, imagine a football player who has been carrying an injury for several months. Suppose that she is playing in a meaningless end of season game. If she tries her hardest then she runs the

risk of exacerbating her injury. Is the player required to try her hardest in this game? Opinions may vary on this case but it doesn't seem completely implausible to think that it is enough if she tries to some sufficient but sub-optimal level. If we accept that this duty does not demand perfect levels of effort from sporting competitors then it is plausible to think that there will be cases where trying one's hardest is supererogatory. If the footballer tries her hardest in the end of season game then this seems praiseworthy from the sporting point of view. If we also think that there is no obligation for her to try her hardest in this case then there seems good reason to think that this is another case of sporting supererogation.

I have argued both that there is good reason to think that distinctly sporting forms of obligation exist and that it is possible to go beyond these duties from the sporting point of view. We might wonder though, whether there is any justification that can be given for making it permissible from the sporting point of view to act in ways that are sub-optimal from that point of view. Why are we not always required to do what is best from the sporting point of view?

However, a reasonable justification can be given for limiting the scope of our sporting duties in this way. The justification I will give appeals to the importance of fairness. Let's first consider what might arise if we attempted to make it a norm of football that players always attempt to change the referee's mind when they think that a decision has wrongly gone in their favour. One problem that may arise here is that fair minded players who are able to look upon the referee's decisions in an unbiased way would be more likely to ask the referee to overturn decisions. Players who have a biased view of the game on the other hand would be less likely to do so. If such a norm were in place then it can be expected that it would unfairly penalize those who can view the game in an evenhanded way. This gives us some reason to prefer, from the

point of view of fairness, a norm that does not expect players to try and overturn refereeing mistakes that are in their favour. Rather, these decisions should be viewed as just one of the many elements of luck that enter into sporting occasions and accept any decisions the referee makes. If we accept this then we should also accept that there is reason to think that the norms of sport should not require people to act in the most sportsmanlike way possible. We can accept this though and still think that when an official makes a particularly clear error, as in the cases of Fowler and Nelson, then the praiseworthy thing to do from the sporting point of view is to ask the referee to change her decision. This means that there can be reasons for players to try and change the referee's mind about mistakes they have made in their favour even if there are also reasons not to make this a general sporting norm. There may also be good reasons not to have a norm that requires players to put the ball out of play whenever a goalkeeper is injured. Such a norm may be liable to abuse by goalkeepers who recognize a quick and easy way of nullifying a goal-scoring chance for the opposition. Again, though, this is compatible with thinking that in cases where a goalkeeper is clearly injured there is good reason to stop play in the way that Di Canio did. This shows that we can justify the existence of sporting norms that do not require us to perform the most sportsmanlike act available.

Of course it could be argued that overall it would be better if players did feel required to inform the referee when they felt they had benefitted from a mistaken decision. Other sports, such as golf for example, involve such a norm and function perfectly well. My point though, is simply to show that there is nothing incoherent in thinking that our sporting norms should not demand that players always act in the most sporting way possible. This gives us sufficient reason to set aside the worry that there is something strange in suggesting that our sporting norms can demand less than what would be best from the sporting point of view.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the fact that in competitive football most players do not perform such acts provides another way to support the claim that there is no obligation to perform the most sporting act available in these cases. This means that those who do act in these sporting ways place themselves at a competitive disadvantage. If we think that for reasons of fairness our sporting obligations ought not to place fair-minded competitors at a competitive disadvantage, then this provides us with additional reason to think that there is no obligation to perform the most sporting act available in these cases.

3. Why it matters

So far I have argued that there is good reason to accept the existence of acts of sporting supererogation. We might wonder why we should care about these acts. I will now give three reasons for thinking that recognising the existence of these acts is important.

The first reason is that the distinction between what is required by the norms of sportsmanship and what is supererogatory can help us respond in the appropriate way to actions that are sub-optimal from the sporting point of view. It is worth remembering that not all such acts will be worthy of being called unsporting, just as not all morally sub-optimal acts are worthy of moral blame. In Urmson's discussion of supererogation, he warns against the possibility of downgrading the force of moral blame by bringing it to bear on any morally sub-optimal act. If we were to do this then, according to Urmson (1958/ 1969, 70), blame would have less force against the more weighty forms of moral wrongdoing. As Urmson puts the point:

If we were to represent the heroic act of sacrificing one's life for one's comrades as a basic duty, the effect would be to lower the degree of urgency and stringency that the notion of duty does in fact possess. The basic moral code must not be in part too far beyond the

capacity of the ordinary men on ordinary occasions, or a general breakdown of compliance with the moral code would be an inevitable consequence; duty would seem to be something high and unattainable, and not for 'the likes of us' (Urmson, 1958/1969, p. 70).

If we blame everyone for every morally sub-optimal act such as failing to give as much as possible to charity or failing to help our elderly neighbours as much as possible, then moral blame will be less effective against serious cases of wrongdoing like theft or murder. The reason Urmson gives for this is that an overuse of moral blame would dull peoples' sensitivities to it. If we start criticizing every morally suboptimal act in the same way that we criticize an act of moral wrongdoing then people will soon become desensitized to being blamed for their behavior. In the same way, if we start labelling every player unsporting if they fail to inform the referee of mistakes that have benefitted them then we might think this form of criticism will lose its force against serious forms of sporting misconduct like diving and simulation. Recognizing the existence of acts of sporting supererogation alerts us to the fact that not all acts that are sub-optimal from the sporting point of view are worthy of this kind of censure. This in turn, helps to guard against the possibility of the force of our criticism being degraded when applied to cases where sporting obligations are violated.

The second reason the existence of acts of sporting supererogation is important is that it helps us identify those players who are truly committed to the values of sport. There is good reason to try to ensure that everyone meets some basic standards of sportsmanship. To ensure this we can censure those who fall below this standard either through formal penalties or through informal censure like blame. This provides reasons for players who care little about the value of sportsmanship to nevertheless comply with sporting norms. However, by creating these additional motivations, we make it harder to identify those who comply with sporting norms out

of a genuine regard for the importance of sportsmanship from those who do so to avoid censure. The possibility of performing sporting acts that are not required by these norms allows us to identify players who truly care about the values of sportsmanship and celebrate them accordingly.

The final related reason why these acts are important is that they may have an important role to play in the fostering of a sporting ethos. Just as the existence of acts of sporting supererogation can help us identify and admire those truly motivated by the values of sportsmanship, they can also remind us of that this is the appropriate way for sports players to be motivated. The most important reason for acting in a sporting way is not to avoid being criticized but because this is the spirit with which sport should be played. The existence of acts of sporting supererogation then can be used to show aspiring athletes the true spirit with which to engage in sporting competition.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that there is good reason to think that acts of sporting supererogation exist. I started by outlining moral supererogation and outlining the conditions that would need to be met in order for acts of sporting supererogation to exist. First, there must be distinctly sporting forms of obligation. Second, these obligations must be capable of being surpassed from the sporting point of view. I argued that there are good reasons to think that both conditions are met and as a result, good reasons to think that acts of sporting supererogation exist. I finished by giving three reasons for thinking that recognizing the existence of these acts is important. First, by recognizing the existence of these acts we will be better able to respond appropriately to acts that are sub-optimal from the sporting point of view. Second, recognizing

the existence of these acts can help us identify those players who are truly committed to the values of sport. Finally, these acts may have an important role to play in the development of a sporting ethos.

The claim that acts of sporting supererogation exist opens up a number of avenues for future research. First, the existence of such acts raises the question of the extent of the demandingness of sporting obligations. Urmson's discussion of moral supererogation led to an extensive and fruitful literature on the nature of moral demandingness and the extent to which we must sacrifice our own interests in order to fulfil our moral obligations.¹⁸ Recognizing the existence of acts of sporting supererogation could lead to similar questions being investigated by sports ethicists. How much sportsmanship should we demand from athletes? Are there limits on the demands we can make on athletes to sacrifice their own interests in the interests of sportsmanship? If so what are these limits and how can they be justified? These are all questions that are worthy of future investigation. My hope is that recognizing the existence of acts of sporting supererogation will help to focus the attention of sports ethicists on these issues.

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¹ Fowler is sometimes credited with deliberately missing his penalty in an attempt to make up for the referee's error but he has subsequently denied this. For Fowler's own account of his decision

to try to score the penalty and examples of players who did deliberately miss penalties because they judged them to have been wrongly awarded see Dart and Goodhart (2007).

² The one exception that I am aware of is Fry (2011), though the main focus of this paper is on the duty to try hard in sports and the possibility of cases of sporting supererogation is discussed only in passing. I discuss this paper more in Section 2.

³ For an overview of the theological origins of the concept see Heyd (1982 Chapter 1)

⁴ Those who endorse this condition include: Archer (2016 a), Ferry (2013), Horgan and Timmons (2010, 37), Portmore (2011, 91) and Rawls (1971, 117).

⁵ McNamara (1996, 427) puts this point in terms of ‘The Minimum That Morality Demands’. Though not all put the point in the same way, the following seem to endorse the claim that supererogatory acts are morally better than non-supererogatory acts: Archer (2016a), Archer and Ware (2017), Dorsey (2013), Ferry (2013, 574), Heyd (1982, 5), Portmore (2011, 92). Some authors argue that there is a need to add a further necessary condition, that the act be praiseworthy to perform (e.g., McNamara (2011, 203), Mellema (1991, 17) and Montague (1989, 102). For an argument against including this additional necessary condition, see Archer (2016b).

⁶ These criteria are similar to those given by Archer and Ware (2017) and McElwee (2017 a) for the conditions that need to be met in order for acts of supererogation to exist in a given normative domain.

⁷ While this seems true for D’Agostino the case is less clear cut for Hamblin’s actions. Given her own role in D’Agostino’s injury and the help she received from D’Agostino, we might think that Hamblin had an obligation to help D’Agostino.

⁸ For challenges to Suits’ account see, for example, Meier (1988) and Simon et al (2014, 26-27). See also Kobiela (2016) for a proposed amendment to Suits’ account.

⁹ Similar claims are defended by McFee (2004 Ch.8) and McNamee (2008 p.1).

¹⁰ An interesting issue that I do not have space to investigate here is whether it is possible to deliberately break the rules and still be said to be playing the game. For a discussion of this issue see D’Agostino (1995), Fraleigh (2003), Leaman (1995), Lehman (1979), Loland (2002), Morgan (1995), Pearson (1995).

¹¹ For a discussion of how to give a conception of fair play that can handle these kinds of cases see Loland and McNamee (2000). The normativity of informal norms is also appealed to by conventionalists, those who hold that sports have to be understood in terms of conventions rather than formal rules. For an influential account of conventionalism see d’Agostino (1995).

¹² See Abad (2010, 30), Feezell (1988) and Leeman (1995).

¹³ Both players admitted in interviews to using their hands deliberately.

¹⁴ For an interesting argument in defence of Maradona’s actions from the moral and sporting point of view see Borges (2010). While I will not attempt a full refutation of Borges’ argument

here, it is worth noting that his claim to better capture the phenomenology of those involved in football does not rest easily with the negative reactions of both players and sports fans to Maradona and Henry.

¹⁵ We might also think that the separation of moral obligations and sporting obligations gives us reason to think that sporting obligations are not moral obligations. According to Bredemeier and Shield's (1986) sport involves a form of 'bracketed morality' in which participants hold themselves to different moral standards than those they normally comply to. This we might think shows the separation of moral and sporting obligations in a way that makes it clear that sporting obligations are not reducible to moral obligations. This is an interesting suggestion though I do not wish to rest my argument on it. Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this.

¹⁶ Cf. the related widely discussed issue of whether sport has an internal morality or merely reflects wider societal values. See, for example, Morgan (1994 Ch. 5) and Simon (2014 Ch.2).

¹⁷ Thanks to an anonymous referee for this suggestion.

¹⁸ For some recent contributions to this discussion, see Vanessa Carbonell (2016) and McElwee (2017 b).