



On being part of a game

Alex Wolf-Root

To cite this article: Alex Wolf-Root (2020) On being part of a game, Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 47:1, 75-88, DOI: [10.1080/00948705.2019.1673762](https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2019.1673762)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2019.1673762>



Published online: 08 Oct 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 235



View related articles [↗](#)




View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



On being part of a game

Alex Wolf-Root 

Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO, USA

ABSTRACT

What is it for someone to be part of a game? While significant work has been done on the concept of playing a game, less has been done on the concept of being part of a game. This paper will look at how someone's status of being part of a game can be distinguished from their status of playing a game, and will then introduce a new taxonomy for the different ways in which someone can be part of a game.

KEYWORDS Games; gameplay; definitions; Suits

Introduction

What is it to be part of a game? While there has been significant discussion about what it is to be playing a game, less attention has been given directly to the question of being part of a game. This paper intends to explore various ways in which someone can be part of a game, whether or not they are playing that game. And while this paper is not an investigation into the concept of a game itself, it should also do some work to help pull apart the concept of game from that of playing a game.

For the purposes of our investigation into ways in which one can be part of a game, I will be taking for granted the Suitsian definition of gameplay. While a central account in the philosophy of sport and games, I recognize that it is not a universally accepted account; indeed there is some interest in more commitment (as opposed to rule) based accounts, such as seen in Kreider (2011) and Ridge (2015). For those unsure of their leanings, this paper might offer some defenses of a classic Suitsian account of gameplay. For those committed commitment-theorists, the major point of this paper – the classification of ways in which one can be part of a game – should still be relevant.

As we know from *The Grasshopper*, Suits' definition of gameplay is as follows:

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 favor of less efficient means [constitutive rules],

CONTACT Alex Wolf-Root  runnerforlife86@gmail.com  Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO, USA

© 2019 IAPS

and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude]. (Suits 1978, 41)

During our exploration we will see that, despite being a central concept in the world of games, one's status of playing a game needn't line up with one's status of being part of a game. Once we understand this, we will be well equipped to classify the various ways in which one can be part of a game.

Part of a game without playing the game

Let's start with an example modified from one given by Suits himself. Take Gabby, an elite sprinter who finds herself in lane one for the 200m quarter-finals at the 2028 Olympic Games. As Gabby is getting set in her blocks, she is informed that there is a bomb across the track, and that only she can defuse it. However, the infield is fenced off, and besides there are tigers and land mines on the infield. She takes off sprinting around the track towards the finish line as she realizes this, which just so happens to be 0.101 seconds after the gun fires, and she safely defuses the bomb just past the finish line.

According to the Suitsian, Gabby wasn't playing 200m dash, because she didn't have the lusory attitude – she wasn't following the rules because they made the game possible or otherwise made the goal more difficult rather than less difficult. She was simply trying to defuse the bomb, and would have cut across the infield if possible, or started before the gun if the starter took longer than he did. Nonetheless, all of her actions were actions of 200m dash, including staying in her lane (remember she was already on the inside lane, and given that it's the Olympics they certainly had a rail rather than a mere line to stop runners from cutting distance) and starting after the gun. Assuming all eight lanes were filled, any onlooker would assume there were eight people playing 200m dash (at least until she continued just passed the finish line to defuse the bomb). But we know they'd be wrong.

I want to say that this is an example of someone (Gabby) being part of a game without playing that game. The other runners were racing her (even if they couldn't see her until they were off the curve due to lane draw) and all of her actions were fitting for being part of a game of 200m dash. If she crossed the line first, there'd even be pressure to say that she won the game of 200m dash. While this last claim would likely be too much of a stretch – plausibly you can't win a game that you aren't playing – there does seem to be some pull towards the claim that the result of that game of 200m dash would have to view her as the winner, and given that, would have to advance her to the semi-finals. Regardless of her advancement to the next round, we should agree that Gabby was not playing this particular game of 200m dash, despite being part of this particular game of 200m dash.

The above example is one where the lack of the lusory attitude made Gabby a non-game-player, while nonetheless still being part of the game. But this is not the only way that someone can be part of a game without playing the game. Next, we will look at an example from Kreider (2011) where it is the actions of the person that makes them a non-game-player despite being part of the game.

His example can be summarized as follows: Alice, who doesn't know the rules of soccer, is talked into helping a shorthanded (shortfooted?) recreational soccer team so that they have a sufficient number of people for an upcoming game. During the entirety of the game, Alice never once kicks the ball, though she does catch and throw it when it comes by her the first time, despite not being the goalie. What's more, she tackles (with arms, not as a slide) an opposing player who runs by with the ball shortly thereafter. After being admonished by those around her, she spends the rest of the match merely standing on the field, watching the ensuing action.

Kreider uses this example to argue against the Suitsian, saying that the Suitsian must say that Alice is not a player. Since he says this response is clearly false – he claims that she was a player, just a very bad one, and takes as evidence post-game discussions about her being a 'lousy player' and the acceptability of assigning a foul when she grabbed the ball – the Suitsian must be wrong. But by pulling apart the concepts of playing a game and being in a game, we can give an alternative, and more accurate, response.

We should say that while Alice was part of the game, she was not playing the game. There was a game of soccer going on and she was on the pitch the entire time. Further, she was invited onto the pitch as a member of the team, suitably recorded on the team roster, as opposed to merely being a passerby running around on the pitch. This should be enough to say that she was part of the game. With this understanding of how she was part of the game it is not so problematic for the Suitsian to say that she was not playing the game. Saying that there is a legitimate sense in which she is part of the game despite not in fact playing the game seems a much better explanation than either saying she was playing the game despite not making any 'moves' in the game of soccer or saying that she didn't take part in the game at all despite being on the pitch and roster.

In the above, both Gabby and Alice were in roles that we would typically think of as part of the game. Gabby had her lane, and Alice was on the team roster, after all. But there are also more incidental ways in which one can be part of a game without playing that game, as the below example will show.

As she does every Sunday morning, May is walking around her local park, the same park that is currently hosting a big footrace. Preoccupied with thoughts of her dear nephew Peter, she's oblivious to the signs, ribbons, and arrows indicating the runners' route. While it is an open course, the runners and event coordinators all assumed that other park visitors would

make sure not to step in front of competitors or otherwise block them. Unfortunately, May is oblivious to the event around her, and walks in front of a narrow passageway on the final turn of the race course, just as the two race leaders – Adriana and Berhane – are flying by. Not wanting to knock over a sweet older lady, the competitors drastically slow, then try to weave around her, each other, and the narrow passageway, then take off sprinting towards the finish line a mere 50 meters away. Berhane, who had been trailing Adriana by a good two seconds before this final turn, managed to respond to and recover from May's presence much better than Adriana did, and managed to cross the finish line two seconds ahead of Adriana.

While May was not playing the game in any sense, it does seem clear that her presence impacted the results of this game of footrace. It is almost certain that, were May not there, Adriana would have held on over the final meters to prevail over Berhane, but their need to respond to May changed the course of the competition. Given this, we should say that May is a part of this game of footrace, even if only incidentally so. This is an incredibly different sort of sense in which Adriana and Berhane, as well as all the hundreds of competitors left in their wake, are part of the game of footrace. It also is different from how the race officials are part of this game of footrace. Although she is not a necessary or expected part of the game, and did not make any 'moves' in the game, we still should say that May is indeed a part of the game.

By now it should be clear that there are multiple ways in which someone can be part of a game without playing that game. But what about the converse? Can someone be playing a game without being part of that game?

Playing a game without being part of the game

Pat is a cross country harrier, and while relaxing in a park he sees that a local club cross country race was about to start across the way. While it is a club race with scoring teams, the race was also open to individual competitors (as is often the case with cross country races), so Pat could have entered. However, he didn't get there in time to register, despite running towards the starting line as quickly as he could. Pat managed to reach the far edge of the starting line mere moments after Starter Bob fired his pistol, but Pat was so tired from running to the start that he immediately found himself behind every other runner, and stayed there for the duration of the approximately seven-kilometer course. No other runner even noticed that Pat was there until after crossing the line and looking back onto the course.

It seems plausible to say that Pat was playing cross country, as well as to say that Pat was not part of that game of cross country.

Justifying the first part seems relatively simple. Pat was trying to cross a line on the ground, but was following a specified course and not jumping on a bike in his attempt to do so. He was not following these rules because he

had no other option, but because following these rules made the activity possible. This is a clear example of classic (Suitsian) gameplay.

It's the second claim – that Pat was not part of that game of cross country – that might need more support. To that end, let me give the same scenario again but from a different point of view.

There were 140 registered runners in a cross country race in a local park, and in addition to everything else going on in the park – from people picnicking to birds chirping – there was one other person who was also running the same loop in the park as the race was run, though that other runner never got in the way of any of those 140 runners.

Told this way, it is rather clear that Pat was not part of that game of cross country. While he was playing a game of cross country, perhaps even incorrectly thinking that he was playing a game with those 140 others, he was not part of the particular game of cross country that those 140 were part of.

However even this result might still seem a little worrisome to you, or at least just a little narrow. What if Pat, instead of always being behind every other runner, spent the entire time just barely in front of everyone else? Or spent the entire time in the middle of the pack? In either of these cases Pat's presence could impact the tactics of everyone else, which could make it the case that Pat actually was part of the game, though not in the same way that everyone else was. We'll come back to such situations later.

I think we can reasonably say that the Pat example is one of someone playing a game without being part of that game. If so, we then can freely mix one's status of playing a game with one's status of being part of a game. While these statuses typically go hand in hand, they need not.

But things aren't so simple. There was another character in the above story that you might have missed, but who nevertheless doesn't clearly fall into either the 'part of a game' or 'not part of a game' categories as described thus far. That other character is none other than the man who set the race in motion: Starter Bob.

Referees, judges, and coaches

While it should be clear that Pat was not part of the above game of cross country, and it is clear that the other 140 runners were part of the game of cross country, it is much less clear what we should say about Starter Bob. Starter Bob never took off down the course, making it hard to see how he could have been part of the race. However, the race started when it did only because Starter Bob fired his pistol when he did. Additionally, Starter Bob had the authority – and as a good starter he always makes certain to remind the field of this – to restart the race if people were trampled in the first 100m, as well as to disqualify someone if necessary. Clearly Starter Bob had some important role in the game, so must have been part of the game.

But the way in which Starter Bob is part of this game seems very different from the way that Alice was part of her games. While Alice never made a legitimate move of the game of soccer, at any given moment she was able and eligible to do so, and as such was still in a role that was directly engaged with the goal of the game of soccer. But it's hard to see how we can say the same thing for Starter Bob.

Starter Bob's involvement in the game seems to be a sort of auxiliary involvement, one where the participation impacts the game but not by the typical ways in which we imagine one impacts a game, namely, by playing (or appearing-to-be-playing) that game. Yet such involvement is actually quite familiar; it is the sort of involvement we see from referees, judges, and coaches in nearly all sports. Despite the cries from too-loyal partisans, they are often thought to not be a 'real' part of the game, despite impacting the game. While I think that a distinction between someone being centrally involved in the game by making the typical moves we think of as actions in a game and someone being auxiliary involved in the game is an important one, it isn't a distinction between being part of a game and not being part of a game. It is just a different way in which someone can be part of the game, thus allowing that referees, judges, and coaches are parts of the game in some important sense, while still differentiating them from the central players of the game.

But even among these three categories of referees, judges, and coaches, we have important differences.

Judges, but not referees and coaches, are necessary to the proper completion of their games. If every athlete fully follows the rules and plans their own in-game actions, no referee or coach is required. The athletes can self-referee. Judges, however, are required to give scores in judged games. Any game of, for example, 3 meter dive requires a judge to give scores, so that there can be a proper result.¹

Referees and judges have authority over the game such that they can make declarations about the game that impact the state of play for all involved.² Coaches, on the other hand, have no such authority to demand such broad changes in the state of play. However, coaches in many sports, but not referees or judges, can make goal-directed moves in the game, such as subbing players or calling time-outs. They attempt to influence the outcome of the game in a partisan fashion. Relatedly, as any NFL fan will be sure to let you know, coaches can cheat, whereas referees and judges can merely make mistakes. This seems to suggest that coaches, but not referees or judges, are playing the game, albeit in a clearly different sort of way that how the athletes are playing the game.

The above makes clear that there are more ways to be part of a game than to act as a player, or otherwise fill a player-role. Referees, judges, and coaches can be part of a game, albeit in a more auxiliary fashion than the more central

parts of games that are typically exemplified by players. And in addition to referees, judges, and coaches, there are others who are present at some game, aren't playing that game, but yet still impact the game from the sidelines. It is to such examples we now turn.

From the sidelines

Anyone who has competed in long games of the footrace variety will be well aware of another important way in which someone can be part of a game without playing that game: by being an aid station worker.

Take a game of marathon, where there will be official aid stations throughout the course. This information is posted on the website, and as the marathon is sanctioned by USA Track and Field (USATF) – the relevant national governing body – there are rules about where and how aid can be given out. Now imagine that you are running neck in neck in the lead of this marathon, waiting for the rule-specified aid station with the much-desired carbohydrate replacement, only to find that the aid station workers failed to get set up in time, thus being unable to hand you your beloved carbohydrates. This left you with insufficient energy to compete at your best for the entire 42.2km footrace, causing you to agonizingly bonk and suffer an excruciating final 10km while you struggled each step merely to not walk, fading back to fifth place by the finish. Further, your competitor, being more experienced in games of marathon, was carrying extra carbohydrate-rich supplements (in accordance with the rules) for just this eventuality, and easily held on to win.

Now for a similar, but importantly different, example.

You're again playing a game of marathon, only this time it isn't sanctioned by USATF or any other such governing body. Importantly, this means that there is no rule about not taking aid from those not at official aid stations. Further, this race decided not to host any official aid stations, leaving it up to each competitor to figure out their own fuel. You and a friend planned to meet midway through the race where she could hand off a carbohydrate-rich supplement, only to see her appear many kilometers too early. You call out for her to meet you in a few more kilometers to hand off the supplement, but she misunderstands and goes to await your arrival at the finish line instead. As in the first example, you eventually bonk terribly and shuffle to the finish line.³

In both cases, the action of folks planning on giving aid made a significant impact on the game. Both those at the official aid station in the first example and your friend in the second example were parts of the relevant game of marathon. In neither case were they playing the game of marathon. The difference between them is that only those in the first example were in any sort of official role in their game.

Even more stereotypical games can be impacted by those on the sidelines. Take the example of baseball. If you've ever been to a large baseball

game, or a small youth game with overly-involved parents, you're well aware that fans can impact a game, despite clearly not playing that game of baseball themselves. The most common way that fans can impact a game is when their cheering, booing, sign-waving, or other physical gestures inspires or distracts those who are playing the game. There are also more extreme cases where they can physically interact with the game, such as when they lean over the rail to directly interact with a live ball. Such interactions can cause a fielder to not catch a ball they otherwise would have, or can even cause an umpire to make changes to the state of the game to better match what they think would have happened if the fan did not interact with the ball. While the actual impact can vary greatly, fans can certainly be part of a game.⁴

But wait, things get even more complicated. There are others who can directly impact the state of play from a sideline-like position in an even different sort of way: the grounds crew. At least in some cases for some games – such as cricket, baseball, and cross country – the field of play can be modified for the purpose of home field advantage. A grounds crew can purposefully clear away all loose rocks, drain all standing water, and even out all the divots in some cross country course to directly benefit a home team of more speed-based rhythm runners against a visiting team of more strength-based mudders and grinders.⁵ This way of being part of the game seems similar to the coach insofar as it directly impacts the game and can have a partisan purpose, while being similar to the referee and judge insofar as this role necessarily directly impacts the game for everyone.

Unlike coaches, judges, referees, aid station workers, and fans, however, the way in which such grounds crews are part of the game has to do with what they do *before* the game to prepare for the game.⁶ And while on a first pass we might not find the idea of grounds crews being in some important sense part of the game unreasonable, I think we should accept this pre-game distinction to rule out grounds crews from being part of the game.⁷ While it might not sound terrible in the grounds crew case, rejecting this distinction would lead to some unreasonable results. We would then also have to include nutritionists and strength coaches as part of the game, for they directly helped the players prepare for the game. From there, it's not too far of a stretch to say that some local vandals who broke onto the field the previous night to impact the field for the detriment of the visiting team were part of the game, or that the author of a leading pop psychology book that was read by a star player would be part of the game, and now it's clear we've gone down a bad rabbit-hole. While there seem to be some important similarities between coaches and grounds crews, I think that actually being present while some game is occurring is a necessary component to being part of that game.

That said, there is a similar concept to the one explored in this paper that could be further explored at another time: being part of a sporting institution. For example, a team owner seems to not be part of a game in a similar way to how grounds crews aren't part of the game, yet both clearly have an impact on the overall sporting institution. Relatedly, sports broadcasters can be central to a fan's experience of watching a game, so while not part of the game in our sense here, they too might be an important part of the sporting institution. Unfortunately a full exploration of these concepts is beyond the scope of this paper, but hopefully future work can be informed by this discussion.

Once we open our eyes to the possibilities, we can see a myriad of examples of ways in which someone is part of a game despite not being a typical game player. But rather than endlessly present examples, I will now present a new taxonomy of the possible ways in which someone can be part of a game.

Taxonomy of being part of a game

Below are three pairs of mutually exclusive ways in which someone can be part of a game.

- Constitutive part of the game: Someone is a *constitutive* part of the game when they are in some official, constitutive-rule-governed, game-recognized role in the game.⁸
- Incidental part of the game: Someone is an *incidental* part of the game when they are not in any official, constitutive-rule-governed, game-recognized role in the game but are nonetheless directly impacting the field of play.
- Central part of the game: Someone is a *central* part of the game when they are a *constitutive* part of the game and are in a role that makes official game-moves directed towards the goal of the game.
- Auxiliary part of the game: Someone is an *auxiliary* part of the game when they are a *constitutive* or an *incidental* part of the game but are not in a role that makes official game-moves directed towards the goal of the game.
- Partisan part of the game: Someone is a *partisan* part of the game when they are a *constitutive* or an *incidental* part of the game and their actions are aimed towards a specific team's (or individual's for individual games) in-game benefit.
- Non-partisan part of the game: Someone is a *non-partisan* part of the game when they are a *constitutive* or an *incidental* part of the game and their actions are not aimed towards a specific team's (or individual's for individual games) in-game benefit.

While this taxonomy gives us eight combinations, only five can consistently go together. Examples for each of these five are below.

- Constitutive, central, partisan: This includes the paradigmatic game-player, though also includes those who act like paradigmatic game-players but don't have the lusory attitude (nothing in any of these definitions require a lusory attitude, but the lack of one is quite rare here).
- Constitutive, auxiliary, partisan: This includes coaches in games that allow official in-game coach interactions to impact the field of play.
- Constitutive, auxiliary, non-partisan: This includes referees and judges.
- Incidental, auxiliary, partisan: This includes coaches for games that don't allow in-game coach interaction. This might also include fans; see below.
- Incidental, auxiliary, non-partisan: This includes oblivious bystanders. And possibly fans; see below.

The three impossible combinations are:

- Constitutive, central, non-partisan: Not possible because a central part of the game requires being a partisan part of the game.
- Incidental, central, partisan: Not possible because being a central part of the game requires being a constitutive part of the game.
- Incidental, central, non-partisan: Not possible because being a central part of the game requires being a constitutive part of the game, and because being a central part of the game requires being a partisan part of the game.

It is worth noting that someone who is a central part of the game will necessarily be a partisan part of the game. These are what we typically think of as players in games. Their role on the team (or as themselves in individual games) is what directs their actions in a partisan way. This is the case even if they don't have the lusory attitude (for whatever reason), and even if they secretly want the other team to win (for whatever reason).

Similarly, a referee, who is a constitutive and auxiliary part of the game will be a non-partisan due to their role. This will be the case even if they very much want one team to win, or are making calls that unjustly favor one side. Like all the classifications here, the partisan/non-partisan divide isn't one of intentions, but rather one of roles.

With our new taxonomy in place, let's see how our above characters fit in.

Gabby, Alice, Adriana, and Berhane are all constitutive, central, partisan parts of their games. While Adriana and Berhane are the only ones playing the relevant game, all are in key roles in their relevant game, no matter their mental states or actual actions. It's worth noting that this also gives us a helpful way to understand the logical incompatibility thesis, which says

that one is not playing a game while they are cheating at that game. Just as Alice and Gabby aren't playing the game due to issues of the lusory attitude yet are part of the game, a cheater may not be playing a game due to not following the rules, but nonetheless can be a (constitutive, central, partisan) part of the game.

May is an incidental, auxiliary, non-partisan part of the game. She directly impacted the game, despite not being in any game-recognized role or making any goal-directed moves in the game.

Pat, while playing a game of cross country, is not in any way part of the game of cross country that the 140 others are part of (even if Pat doesn't realize that himself). However, if instead of always being behind the 140 others he was in front of some so as to change their tactics, he would be, just like May, an incidental, auxiliary, non-partisan part of the game. While Pat might think that he is a partisan part of the game, his actions wouldn't be aimed towards any partisan change in the results for others, as he wouldn't factor into the results and his running in the pack doesn't do any special work to help one team/individual over another. It might be argued that Pat is not even playing the game of cross country here, even if he thinks that he is. If Pat ran the course 2 hours after the other runners, as opposed to immediately after, we would likely describe this as simply running the course, or perhaps time-trialing the course, and it's hard to see what's fundamentally different about running two hours later versus immediately after. Perhaps we should say that Pat was playing the single-player game of 'cross country time-trial' despite thinking that he was playing the multi-player game of 'cross country'. I'm not here committed to a particular view on what, if anything, he was playing here, though it's certainly worth exploring. But whatever your view on this question, Pat is not in any way a part of the game of cross country being played by the other 140 athletes.

The unnamed aid station workers in the USATF sanctioned marathon would be constitutive, auxiliary, non-partisan parts of the game. They were in a role governed by the game (due to the USATF sanctioning), and this role was such that their actions were supposed to be directed towards the benefit of everyone, despite actually failing to be set up in time to help the first competitors. Your friend who failed to give the agreed upon aid in the non-USATF sanctioned marathon would be an incidental, auxiliary, partisan part of the game. She was not in any rule-governed role, and her actions were aimed to help you in the game of marathon, despite failing to do so.

Finally, Starter Bob would be a constitutive, auxiliary, non-partisan part of the game.

A lingering question you might have is the partisan status of fans. While many fans are partisan in the typical sense in which we use the word, there can also be disinterested fans who merely care about a good competition.⁹ And there's nothing in principle to preclude a fan from changing their

behavior during a game. Should fans be partisan or non-partisan on this new taxonomy? I'm frankly not completely sure. To me, it doesn't seem like goal-directed-behavior must be built into the role of fan, which would make fans non-partisans on my view. However, when we typically think of fans at games they are very partisan in the generic sense of the word, though of course this is just a contingent fact about current fans who attend games. Perhaps there are actually two different fan-roles; there are both partisan fan roles and non-partisan fan roles. While more work needs to be done to specify exactly where fans fall into my taxonomy, I hope that the failure to fully spell out their partisan status needn't be a death-blow to the current theory, and instead provides an interesting avenue of exploration for one of you fine folks to pursue in the future.

As we near the end of this paper, astute readers might be wondering about the distinction between referees and judges with regards to these categories, given the attention given to them earlier in this paper. Alas, there is no difference with regards to this taxonomy. Both are constitutive, auxiliary, non-partisan parts of their games. The differences between referees and judges has to do with the sort of power they have in their games, but that is based on the rules of the particular games at issue. Just as some string of plays might seem worth pursuing on the field yet fail to score, sometimes a course of inquiry doesn't lead to key results, but that doesn't mean you can't still learn a lot from your work along the way.

Conclusion

In this paper, I offered up a taxonomy for ways in which someone may be part of a game. There are three pairs of mutually exclusive characteristics, which give rise to five possible ways in which one may be part of a game. While this key result should be interesting in its own right, this paper was also intended to help pull apart the concepts of playing a game and being in a game. While much more work needs to be done on understanding the various terms associated with games – not least of all finding a good definition of 'game' itself – my hope is that this paper helped to clarify some terms of the debate.

Notes

1. There are some, including later Suits (1988), who think that some sports such as 3-meter dive are not games, but rather are athletic performances. On this view, the judge couldn't be part of the game because there is no game.
2. The exact relationship between referees and the state of the game, however, is not a clear or universally agreed upon one. For a fantastic discussion, see Griffioen (2015).
3. Yes, both examples are autobiographical, and they pain me to remember. But to be fair, much credit for the bonking in the first example is due to my own

poor tactics early in the race, as well as my failure to prepare for such eventualities. The second example is more loosely based on real life, as the event that inspired it was fortunately a mere ~20km leg on an ~300km relay, leading to a significantly less impactful bonk. But certainly many others have experienced incredibly similar events in their games of marathon.

4. For a thorough discussion of some major moments in Major League Baseball history involving fans physically impacting a game, see Wade (2010). For a more general discussion of the phenomenon of a home field advantage due to less direct fan interaction, see Eveleth (2013).
5. While this may be in line with the rules of the sport, any *real* cross country runner knows that we should highly value mudders and grinders, and that the current US trend towards manicured courses is an affront to the spirit of cross country.
6. Thanks to Alastair Norcross for pointing out that in some games, such as cricket, there are grounds crews that work during the game as well. In such cases, we should say that the grounds crew is part of the game in the same way that a referee is part of the game if they are working for some neutral site, or that they are part of the game in the same way that a coach is part of the game if they are working for some home team.
7. While this holds when we are talking about specific game-instances of our typical games, there are games in which we would want to say that grounds crews can be part of the broader game despite seeming to act not during an obvious game-instance. Take for example the game of 'NFL Football Playoffs,' where some group of typical games of football are moves in the larger game of 'NFL Football Playoffs.' Actions such as those of the grounds crew and roster changes by coaches would not be pre-game with regards to this larger game, and would indeed count as moves in this larger game of 'NFL Football Playoffs.' For further discussion see Kolers (2015) and Wolf-Root (2018).
8. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that I use the term 'constitutive' here. It is genuinely a much better term than the one I originally used!
9. For some discussions on different ways one can be a fan, see Dixon (2001) and Mumford (2013).

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my dissertation committee of Alastair Norcross, Garrett Bredeson, David Boonin, Chris Heathwood, and Nick Villanueva for their early questioning which led to this paper. Thanks also to Paul Gaffney and the anonymous reviewers from this journal who gave substantial feedback. And extra-special thanks to the late Bob Shor, whose selfless work as race starter and meet official helped generations of young people experience the joys of athletics.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

Alex Wolf-Root  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3949-2869>

References

- Dixon, N. 2001. "The Ethics of Supporting Sports Teams." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 18 (2): 149–158. doi:10.1111/1468-5930.00182.
- Eveleth, R. 2013. "Home-Field Advantage Is Real, and Here's Why." *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 19. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/home-field-advantage-is-real-and-heres-why-1146109>
- Griffioen, A. 2015. "Why Jim Joyce Wasn't Wrong: Baseball and the Euthyphro Dilemma." *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 42 (3): 327–348. doi:10.1080/00948705.2015.1036874.
- Kolers, A. 2015. "The Grasshopper's Error: Or, on How Life Is a Game." *Dialogue* 54 (4): 727–746. doi:10.1017/S0012217315000499.
- Kreider, A. J. 2011. "Game-Playing Without Rule-Following." *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 38 (1): 55–73. doi:10.1080/00948705.
- Mumford, S. 2013. "Ways of Watching Sport." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 73: 3–15. doi:10.1017/S1358246113000222.
- Ridge, M. 2015. "Cheating and Trifling." Paper presented at "The Philosophy of Games, Play, and Sports: After Suits", Toronto, March 27.
- Suits, B. 1978. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Suits, B. 1988. "Tricky Triad: Games, Play, and Sport." *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 15: 1–9. doi:10.1080/00948705.1988.9714457.
- Wade, D. 2010. "Inside the Rules: Fan Interference." *FanGraphs*, December 2. <https://tth.fangraphs.com/inside-the-rules-fan-interference>
- Wolf-Root, A. 2018. "Pre-Game Cheating and Playing the Game." *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. doi:10.1080/17511321.2018.1536676.