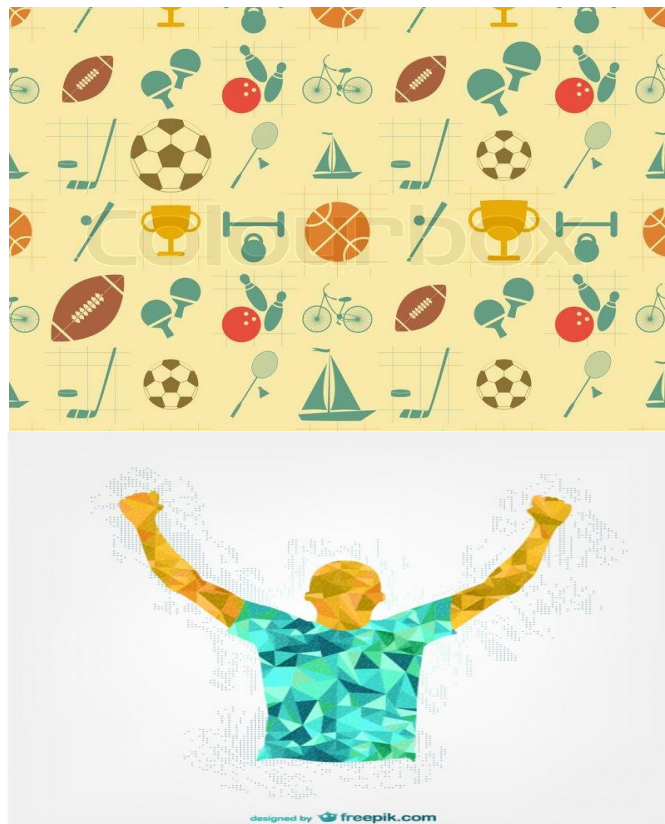


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Loyalty Within the Sports Province

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Loyalty. A concept that is masked and made murky in the sports world, usually not really highlighted or cared to by most. Pragmatically, the business world and sheer amount of money in the sports market hinders any sort of longevity for players on a team. Athletes often are shifted around their respective sport leagues, contrary to most fans (who stick by a specific team through thick and thin). This can be DUE to various reasons, the treatment of the player, money, and the individual athlete's goals. The purpose of this paper, in all equity, is: we need to promote loyalty amongst athletes in sports more frequently, despite the potential variance of perception between fans and athletes, because it will assure the competitive aspect and interest level of sports is maintained. Overall, the composition of this paper can be broken down into three distinct parts: *the complex transfer process, internal vs external influences on the athlete, and the cohesion between fans and athletes*. What the first section of this paper will offer is every grit-covered detail that occurs in a transfer from youth-to-team or team swap and plunge into discussion on the revolutionized market. What the second part of this paper will offer is the internal influences (ambition, ethics, persuasion of the prefrontal cortex, behavioral inhibition) that affect an athlete, as well as the external influences (money, agents, club management) that affect an athlete and his decision to transfer or not. Alas, the third and clinching part of this paper will elaborate on how fan's senses can affect a team's identity, how a loyalty in an individual can stem outward to others in a group, and what specifically affects attendance rates at stadiums.

Complex Transfer Process

The 'transfer' process across all sports varies slightly, yet still retains a similar spine of structure that influences players careers. A player would either be released and then signed as a free agent to another team, sold to another team, or traded for a player(s) that are of equal value. Also, there are release clauses in soccer, and 'player options' in football, basketball, and baseball, where the specified player can have a choice to leave or stay at a team depending what year the clause is in the contract. The terminology is different throughout all the sports, but the concept is congruent. Honing in on the soccer realm, there has been a study on how the transfer market has changed in recent years. Feess, & Muehlheuser. (2003, March) asserted the revitalized importance of the financial aspect of the game. Teams now care moreso about contract lengths of players, wage differential between players, investment incentives of a youth prodigy, or a unsettled player, and profits in any platform possible. From this, it's discerned that sporadic components of contract disputes, clubs forcing to sell their best assets, and increased value of players that are all within the process can dictate a player's future. Smith (2016) pointed out that a player's contract is consistent of a base wage, lower than what is stated in the record books, but matches that number from loyalty/match/international cap/bonuses/signing on fees. Dissecting the contract is important because these bonuses can be an incentive for an athlete to stay or not. On a youth level, researchers have found a way to calculate the future of an ambitious athlete based on a few parameters. This new methodology has been proven to be quite effective. Till, Jones, Copley, Morley, O'Hara, Chapman, & Beggs. (2016) explained that three factors of speed, agility, and injury record are the main determinants in talent identification on a early basis. As athletes are being scouted en route to be professional, limiting the criteria to these

three categories will only increase competition within the bunch and increase tenure of them at a team, as they will find the need to prove themselves on the big stage.

Sheer amounts of influxed money and occasional recessions in each sports specific market has had a dictated impact on the number of transfers and signings in terms of all the team sports. Howard, & Burton. (2002, March-April) examined the financial backbone of the American sports industry on the back of the recession it had in the early 2000's. Howard. et al., (2002) noted that due to the economy, recession of amount of money in sports can occur, leaving clubs to adopt a marketing plan that can cope with the slide. The prevalence of this is grand to the scheme of sports loyalty because club's marketing plans in the past have been to increase ticket prices (leaving fans urged to protest and defy this action) as an outlay to gain revenue to make up for such a recession. Or they will just pull back on spending. Without money, signings can't be made, thus recessions are beneficial to the loyalty of players. Now that this inflated surplus of money is instilled in the athletic province, athletes are looking for the big bills in their checks. Hilpert, Wysong, Hartley, Latino, & Zabkar. (2007) asserted that there is a positive correlation between athletes and their contract earnings on a yearly basis. Hipert. et al., condoned that with sponsorships clinged onto players as well, financial bonuses are at a premium. Certain players have sponsorships, other's don't. They all aspire to be moderately paid equally. That being said, leagues have Players live a short career and want as much money as they can, although not all play for the money alone.

Internal Vs. External Influences on Athlete

Intimate influences exist in the world that influence our mind and way of thinking, let alone the athlete in particular. One of them being the individual's' ambition. Dungy. (2010, Fall) endorsed that athletes must be focused on the club's main objectives set at the beginning of the season. Dungy went on to say that when the ambition varies from the player and the club itself, it's known as 'bad' ambition. When players are content with the objectives set by the club and want to match those aspirations, loyalty will ensue between the two parties. Afterwards, they shall put in the effort to perform at the highest level consistently. This motivation has the probability to inspire younger generations to commit to a team that shares their prospects. Another influence is the brain chemistry within the prefrontal cortex of the athlete. Sakagami, Pan, & Uttl. (2006) pointed out that there are two cortical pathways that lead to decisions; the parieto-premotor (extended dorsal) pathway - that makes decisions about motor actions automatically fashion and the temporo-ventrolateral prefrontal (extended ventral) pathway - which makes deliberate decisions and has inhibitory control over behavior. Both of these pathways are capable of making decisions, however the one extended ventral pathway can regulate the desire of an impulse decision in the other pathway. Shifting to the athletic persona, as the opportunity arises to leave because of something appealing, depending on how developed the prefrontal cortex is, that decision can be restrained and thought over. Keeping the contingency of loyal athletes clinged onto their club. Behavior inhibition also has a say in our decision making. In other words it's the athletes ethical rumination of a career commitment. Sakagami et al., conveyed that the extended ventral pathway is linked to behavior inhibition. Typically, behavior inhibition sparks a sudden will to withdraw from situations/people/environments that are uncomfortable to the person in question. Athletes can

resist desires that are not well thought through, and can by the same fold, convince themselves they aren't in the best place for their career. A proposal from another team can be turned down by the athlete as well. It lingers on the strength of their inhibition and which situation they apply it to. All of these influences have an impact on the athlete's decision to stay loyal for the sake of competition in sports.

Various outermost influences also contribute to the persuading of our mind and the execution of our decision making. With money being the most prominent. Smith (2016) acknowledged that in the 30 years of him being an agent, he has never seen the supremacy money has on the transfer market. Smith (2016), also shared that with the increase of revenue for clubs, more money is present to complete transactions, only if the will is there from the parties. If money is available, people want to have their share. It's part of human nature. Agents play a major role in persuading athletes alongside money. Payne. (2011) wrote that on the college level, agents are evading regulations set by the NCAA to scout players and attract them. Payne. (2011) also noted that if a streamline policy was put in place, agent's behavior would tend to improve. This alludes to the sneaky side of agents that can seriously impact athletes career moves. It can be translated to the professional leagues. Agents wanting a player to move to a team, at a certain time for the point of making revenue for their agency firm. Not all agents have bad intentions, as Smith (2016) endorsed. Agents should do their best to console a player, which is a side of the agents that isn't appreciated. Athletes rely on agents, but need one that reflects them as a person and athlete and their needs. In agency firms, there are a diverse pool of these agents, with a match imminent. Lastly, club management is the ultimate outside factor that coaxes athletes. This coincides with regards to playing time, wages, and treatment as a person. The inconsistent level

of respect certain clubs give to players deters them and globally stimulates treachery. Smith (2016) declared that footballers have greater ability to dictate their future compared to past years, club's pushing them around limits and lowers their confidence to do so. Case-by-case, club's treatment of players is different. They'll freeze and sell 'x' player out of the team, and 'y' player playing well, they'll want to keep him and extend his or her deal. Other times, they'll be patient with 'x' player. The reasoning is in what gives them success on the field and financially.

Cohesion Between Fans and Athletes

Unity between all players in a team is pivotal to retaining the services of every single one of team. We live in an era where team chemistry is vital in order to be triumphant in their competitions. Newson, Buhrmester, & Whitehouse (2016) explain that one individual who very committed and loyal to a team can influence other players on the same team to stay and be part of their aim. In other words, loyalty can stem from a group from a SINGLE person. It may seem preposterous for an individual to have this much power and influence. If it's the captain, then this claim is only further enforced, as he or she has the respect of the entire dressing room. (Newson et al. 2016) also state that lifelong loyalty to a group is only true when the individual stays at a team for an extended period of time, regardless of the more attractive options and through the positive and negative times of a club. Indeed, as a player has this 'through thick and thin' attitude, it will rub off on others in reciprocal fashion and make the overall behavior of the group more stable and consistent for years to come.

What's necessary for a healthy organization to succeed is the relationship with fans to flourish and want to come to stadiums, as they contribute to the players performance and commitment indirectly. (Newson et al. 2016) introduced to the reader that fans are very committed to their teams, spending their hard earned money and valuable time to follow and attend their games. Attendance rates are vital for the sports environment as fans give a sense of encouragement for the athletes on the field and help keep the game tenacious. Bee, & Havitz. (2010, January) explained that there are two types of loyalty: attitudinal and behavioral. Behavioral is what compels people to come to an event. Attitudinal is described as fan commitment and the neglect to change to another fanbase. These two sections of loyalty directly impact the attendance rates of fans, on a moral level. It's the pride of fans that keeps them in existence of sports teams. Miscellaneous factors like ticket prices can also be a reason to increase/decrease attendance. Fans have such a key effect on the loyalty of athletes and their identity, that their senses have beneficial positive connotations towards those two elements. Lee, Heere, & Chung. (2013) reported that sight, touch and smell affected team loyalty positively, and that sight, sound, touch, and smell, affected team identity positively. At the moment fans feel comfortable in their stadium, can see the team playing well, they will stick around the club. Fans noise in correlation to what they see on the pitch, while sitting in seats, and smelling the aroma in the stadium will give players a moral boost and encourage them to play well. Thus creating a competitive atmosphere. Lee, et al., (2013) distributed the wisdom that the team identity governs the loyalty of all players. What ties into a team identity is their reputation, playing style. This claim makes ideal sense, because if a team knows the direction they are headed in, they are more likely to abide by and perform for the club.

Conclusion

In brief, loyalty amongst athletes must be promoted for the sake of competition in sports. This is though athletes apprehension of loyalty may shift from fan's from time to time in their career span. The thrill that fans get from watching sports is dependent on how competitive and successful their club is relative to the rest of the club's specific league. Same can be said about players, they want to be competitive and play at their optimum, yet this era doesn't condone it unfortunately. We have witnessed many teams in any arbitrary sport dominate their league, because of a insufficient disposal of rivals for their potent unit. Everyone from the manager to the fans also care for the contingent that is the makeup of their club. Evidently, the status of loyalty in our vast sports world isn't as prominent as it should be.

For possible recifying of this epidemic, I would suggest a transformation of the whole transfer process to give a more broader, transparent look at the transfer market. Scouting needs to be modified. The players without teams are in their own market which is really independent of the transfer market, and depends on the wages of the player vs. which teams can afford that. Not too much improvement there needed, to be fair. Nether the level of impact agents have on players careers. Yes, they are needed but not to the extent of moving their client for a decent paycheck. Agents need to inherit an impartiality towards their clients, I find. Negotiate with a club so that you get the best deal for your client, the team, and then yourself. Proceedings will go smoother when all parties are satisfied. I appreciate the agents that genuinely do the best for their client. If players really do have more power to dictate their own lives, let's see how that goes. Why not?

We must emphasize the will to stay at a team from youth level, develop players from youth to cope the ethical and economical decisions in the future regarding their careers. Perhaps just focus on your form and loyalty will branch amongst our youth, transforming the status of loyalty on a global basis. If players are confident in their form, they'll relish and use it as a direction to play consistently. If you leave abroad, there are no guarantees that you will play as much and adaptation takes time as well. Regardless of how developed the prefrontal cortex is, the inhibition of athletes behavior can resist any temptation to make rash decisions and have a career move that you may or may not regret. The athletes contemplation of the ethical thought behind their decision will also have a toll on the mind. Most of time, it's whether or not you leave for greener pastures, despite the respect and humility you were given by the staff and everyone else. I might even add that if a group can be kept compact together by the basis of a loyal individual, or a coherent/symmetrical ambition, it'll do wonders for the good of the sport on all levels. Players need to understand it more efficiently to operate in the boundaries of it. Therefore fans can be more tolerant of their decisions and the functionality of the entire club/organization can be fluent. As a repercussion, fans will inspire their team to win at all costs so long as the environment is suiting.

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