

REMAINS OF AMATEURISM IN SPORT: THE EXAMPLE OF A FEMALE RUGBY TEAM

*RESÍDUOS DO AMADORISMO NO ESPORTE: A EXEMPLO DE UMA EQUIPE DE
RÚGBI FEMININO*

*RESIDUOS DEL AMATEURISMO EN EL DEPORTE: A EJEMPLO DE UN EQUIPO
DE RUGBY FEMENINO*

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Keywords:
Amateurism.
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Abstract: Amateurism is part of the history of modern sport and, despite professionalization, it is still present in sports' imaginary. However, it plays a key role in some sports, such as rugby. Field research conducted with a female rugby team in Florianópolis, Brazil – including observations and semi-structured interviews with players – found that the amateur ideal is a guiding element of that dynamic sport, whether it is in relations pervaded by hierarchy and respect for the other or in tradition, which is increasingly threatened by professionalization.

Palavras chave:
Amadorismo.
Rúgbi.
Profissionalização.

Resumo: O amadorismo faz parte da história do esporte moderno e, ainda hoje, apesar da profissionalização, compõe o imaginário esportivo. Em algumas modalidades, porém, desenvolve papel exemplar, como no caso do rúgbi. Por meio de pesquisa de campo realizada em uma equipe feminina de rúgbi sediada em Florianópolis-SC – composta por observações do cotidiano do time e entrevistas semiestruturadas com jogadoras –, encontramos o ideal amador como elemento norteador da dinâmica desse esporte, seja nas relações permeadas pela hierarquia e pelo respeito ao outro, seja no lugar ocupado pela tradição que vem sendo, gradativamente, tensionada pela profissionalização.

Palabras clave:
Amateurismo.
Rugby.
Profesionalización.

Resumen: El amateurismo es parte de la historia del deporte moderno y, aún hoy, pese la profesionalización, es uno de los componentes del imaginario deportivo. En algunas modalidades, sin embargo, el amateurismo tiene un papel ejemplar, como en el caso del rugby. A través de una investigación de campo desarrollada en un equipo femenino de Florianópolis, Brasil, compuesta por observaciones del cotidiano del equipo y entrevistas semiestructuradas con las jugadoras. Encontramos el ideal amateur como elemento norteador de la dinámica de este deporte, tanto en las relaciones estructuradas por la jerarquía y por el respeto al otro, como en el lugar ocupado por la tradición, que ha sido gradualmente amenazada por la profesionalización.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The history of sport – a modern undertaking – cannot be detached from what was called amateurism, whose main characteristic is advocating the game played for the sake of pleasure and sport, with no other intentions such as trophies, medals, fame or money. Associated with a very specific mentality based on the chivalric ethos, the amateur ideal was part of the nineteenth century campaign for character (GAY, 1995), but also to maintain some social exclusiveness by the aristocracy, which was beginning to experience their own ruin.

Thus, resistance to professionalism is based on a moral justification. If the program of modern sport was fair play and the spreading of its values, honesty by those involved was a condition for it, as well as stoic self-control, since “those who played fairly did not boast or elate; they were good losers and good winners – which was more difficult” (GAY, p. 445). Only amateurs would be able to accomplish that, while professionals could not guarantee it since they had other interests at stake.

On the other hand, the amateur ideal is also based on social issues, being an important element of distinction¹ for privileged classes, especially the nobility, who tried to resist their own decline. Thus, (amateur) gentlemen distinguished themselves from (professional) players, emphasizing class divisions whose most notorious model was Victorian England, where modern sport and the amateur ideal originate. That was an attempt to keep at least some sports exclusive to the elites – amateurs who had time and money to devote themselves to selfless sports. According to Gay (1995, p. 442), those snobs sports include tennis, rowing, equestrianism and polo, which “[...] demanded expensive accessories and a commitment of time and monthly payments far beyond the reach of the working classes”.

On amateurism, Dunning (1992), argues that sport in nineteenth-century England was practiced through free compliance with the rules, regardless of pecuniary interests or selfish ends, that is, merely for fun. However, the amateur ethos would have gained strength after the threat by incipient professionalization of some sports, thus attracting middle and lower class groups to the sports field, which gradually ceased to be exclusive to the elite. Therefore, an amateurish ideology crystallized, seeking to maintain – based on a moral discourse that advocated sport focused on the pleasure of dispute (free of other interests) – specific forms of participation in the activities that the ruling class considered as their right (which was actually possible in pre-industrial times, according to the author, but could not be kept for long). Amateurism was as a response and some sort of resistance to increasing seriousness in sports – toward greater competitiveness, more involvement and focus on results – thus delimiting values, attitudes and specific structures that oppose those linked to professionalism, and which were gradually collapsing. Rugby was also part of that context.

Resistance to this guidance has developed on several occasions in Britain, perhaps most notably through attempts made since the late nineteenth century to keep rugby as a sport for amateur practitioners above all, based on voluntary organization and a “friendly” game schedule, i. e., a sport where rules were intended to ensure players’ rather than viewers enjoyment, where organization in clubs at regional and national levels was based on unpaid occupation and where there was no formal competition structure, “cups” or “leagues” (DUNNING, 1992, p. 299-300).

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, in his short essay *How can you be sporting?*, says: “Fair play is the way of playing the game characteristic of those who do not get so carried away by the game as to forget that it is a game, those who maintain ‘the rôle distance’, as Goffman puts it, which is implied in all the rôles designated for the future leaders” [emphasis in the original] (BOURDIEU, 1983, p. 139).

In the passage above, Dunning lets us see the movement started in England in the nineteenth century to keep sport as noble gentlemen's activity. In the twenty-first century, despite the fast development of professional sport, involving million-dollar contracts and long work hours, traces of amateurism could still be found in sports practices. That is the case of Brazilian rugby, placed between the desire to strengthen itself as a sport in the country – making it more and more competitive internationally – and the effort and desire to keep the amateur ideal alive, with its values linked to friendship, respect and love for the club.

In the following pages, we present the issue of amateurism in the world of rugby, based on an ethnographic work conducted with a club from the city of Florianópolis, the Desterro Rugby Clube,² especially with its women's team.³ The empirical material consists of a set of 24 observations (all recorded in a field diary⁴), between 2010 and 2011 (including training sessions, social gatherings, trips and matches), of the Desterro⁵ women's team's daily life, and semi-structured interviews with four of its female players who are (or were) also in Brazil's national team.

2 RUGBY

The Rugby Football Union – rugby's main regulatory body for rugby – has always valued the amateur ideal, different from its sister Football Association, which has long accepted professional players in its member teams (RIAL, 1998). That does not mean that disputes and controversies over rugby professionalization do not exist within that organization. They have even led to a split that resulted in two different categories: *rugby union* and *rugby league*. The former is more traditional and more widespread while the latter is less known. In addition to different rules,⁶ an important distinction between the rugby union and the rugby league is that the former remained amateur while the latter turned professional (departing from the union). The league's low popularity compared to the union already seems to indicate predominance of the amateur character in the world of rugby, which has been historically a gentlemen's practice.

Despite strong body contact – which can cause discomfort to viewers not used to that sport – rugby's codes of conduct praise respect, discipline, courage, loyalty, sportsmanship, integrity, solidarity, teamwork, unity, camaraderie, cordiality and friendship, and clean and fair game. These elements seem to govern the dynamics of rugby teams, for example, in the payment of fees⁷ to the club to be able to practice it (and often, when travelling to play), respect for each other in and off the field, the third half tradition – an after-match meeting between teams sponsored by the home team that, made up of gentlemen, should offer food and drink to the visiting group, thus providing a socializing space between rugby lovers to celebrate

2 The Desterro Rugby Club was founded in 1995 after the creation of a men's team, while the women's team was formed in 1996-1997. Currently, the club has men's (youth and adult) and female (adult) teams. It is maintained through monthly fees paid by its members and players (only members can play in the club's teams), as well as former players, family members, friends, etc. Training sessions for each category take place three times a week, but players also invest in extra hours of preparation, performing various physical training activities, including bodybuilding. The same applies to men.

3 Although the study that partly resulted in this article was not guided by Gender Studies, we highlight the inclusion of women in a sport with a strong male tradition. The fact that it lacks tradition in Brazil seems to facilitate the development of rugby among women in the country. However, the results show that even though the women's team was more successful worldwide than the men's team, national support remains higher for the latter. Issues related to women's place (or places) in the rugby world will be presented and discussed later.

4 A methodological change took place during ethnographic work: the researcher started only as an off-the-field observer, but after invitations from the group of players, she also started to work within it, actively participating in training and the team's activities.

5 That is how the native discourse calls the club; from now on, we will use it.

6 There are differences in field dimensions, scoring (the try, main way to score, has 5 points at the Rugby Union and 4 at the Rugby League, for example), number of players (15 in the Union and 13 in the League – not forgetting that the Union also has a 7-player version) and in the form of playing (position in the field in the Union and possession of the ball in the League).

7 At the time of research, the monthly fee was R\$ 50.00, with a 10% fine for late payment.

camaraderie and fair play. Finally, maintaining and spreading what native discourse calls the spirit of rugby, which makes the sport one of the last strongholds of aristocratic sport made and practiced by gentlemen. Rugby practitioners would be much more than just players, they are rugbiers who bear its values, who teach younger people and strive to keep the tradition alive. The club link is very important in that dynamic. Important elements include love for the club, the jersey, teammates who share the sport's daily life, forming a kind of family that shares the hardships and pleasures provided by rugby.

In Desterro's women's team, amateurism is present in different ways, both in training sessions and in the words of our respondents. Here we will highlight the following issues: 1) the specific dynamics of relations, pervaded by hierarchy and respect for the other; 2) the place of tradition and its tensions with professionalization.

3 THE DYNAMICS OF RELATIONS: RUGBY AND ITS CHARACTERS

As we enter the world of rugby, we see hierarchical practices with regard to relations among the characters that circulate in it. Referee, opponent, seniors (those with more time in the sport) and coach take on privileged places and roles.

There is a specific stance towards referees. Only the team's captain can speak to the referee, who should be addressed as "Sir" (or "Madam") under any circumstances. He or she is unquestionable, as we were told by one respondent: "[...] in respect for the referee, which is amazing, since you might think he is wrong, but you're going to leave the ball and walk ten meters, because he signaled a penalty⁸ and it's really a penalty" (JOANA⁹).

Note that arguing with a referee is formally considered an offense in rugby subject to harsh punishment, which reiterates full respect for referees.¹⁰ As we see in Joana's speech, that dynamic is already incorporated into the game's structure. Even if there is some dissatisfaction with a referee's stance, it must be accepted because in that time and space he or she has the power to regulate (and, in a way, guide) the game. The referee "is there to draw the line", as rightly pointed out by Wisnik (2008, p. 104) regarding football: "rummaging the game through the eyes of the Law" (p. 107). Also linked to this, there is unrestricted respect for the rules of the sport, which is ultimately what referees represent.

In the context of the game, respect for opponents is critical. They share one's love for rugby, devoting some of their time to receive a team in their town or travel to a different place for a match (as pointed out by one of our respondents). Therefore, they deserve all respect and should be treated seriously even when they are technically inferior. In that case, support offered to beginners by more experienced players is not uncommon, even if they play for another team. In a match we observed between Desterro and the Brusque Rugby Club, Marcela,¹¹ one of our interviewees who did not take part in the dispute because of an injury, would give tips and tactically guide the opponent team, saying how they should position themselves and move

8 The penalty is severe and the offending team has to be ten meters away from the site when it is kicked. It is a way to score, as well as try, conversion kick and drop goal.

9 Joana: 31, has played rugby since 2004 and in that year she already began playing for Brazil's national team, being its captain at the time of the research (2011-2013).

10 Suspensions range from one to three games – in the case of interference with referees or refusal to comply with their decisions – to one to three years for aggression to them.

11 Marcela: 33, has played rugby since 1997; she was one of the founders of Desterro's women's team. She played for the national team already in its first year in 2001 – she was its first captain – until 2009. She was the president of the Desterro Rugby Club in 2010-2013.

around in order to optimize the match. In an interview, she spoke about that, showing that the practice is common rather than just hers.

For example: when we're playing against a supposedly weaker team, you see clearly that the girls can't play. I'm there playing and I've often given advice to the other team: "No, no, you're too far ahead, go back to help your teammate". So there is that exchange. (MARCELA)

Such attitude is an example of amateurism, indicating that the game and the pleasure involved in it are more important than winning. But pleasure, as pointed out by Elias (1992, p. 233), demands an unstable tension balance that depends, among other things, "[...] on dispositions guaranteeing that competitors, not only when they attack but also when they defend, enjoy equal opportunities of victory and defeat". That is, the higher the unbalance between the teams' technical and tactical conditions, the more discouraging the game, even for those who are absolutely dominant. It is therefore necessary to reduce differences, to bridge gaps between the teams' levels, as shown by Marcela – an attitude that should come from seniors, because they know rugby better than beginners. The latter need someone to guide and train them, to introduce them in that still strange world full of codes and laws they have yet to master. At birth, children enter a new world and need adults to learn about it – a process mediated by education, as shown by Hannah Arendt (1993). Likewise, beginners, in their condition of children in the context of rugby, need seniors' help to be socialized.

In this context, beginners are constantly cared for, as seniors are always attentive so that they are well treated, integrate into the group and learn the game. More experienced players are some sort of guardians to newer ones and should pass on the sport's teachings, values and traditions, keeping the taste for rugby alive. An example is the following excerpt from the field diary:

Over lunch, the group spreads over the supermarket food court. J. [senior] sits with me, P. and H. [beginners]. I find it interesting that J. is always close to the beginners, watching, teaching, giving explanations, keeping them company. For the trip, it's the same: the beginners (Me, H and P) go [in the car] with J.¹²

The role played by Desterro's seniors is partly similar to that of bodybuilders in fitness centers, as shown by Sabino (2000). According to the author, they stand out for their good physical shape resulting from years and years of working out, and become the object of admiration of their peers (i. e. men¹³), "not only for their sometimes frightening size, but also for their experience and knowledge of the entire process of building a muscular body" (SABINO, 2000, p. 74). What should be built in rugby is not a perfect body, but rather a perfect player, who is technically, tactically and morally capable for disputes. So seniors are mirrors, they are models to be followed. They often provide advice, explaining how a technical movement should be executed, how to position oneself in the field, which attitude one needs towards others in the rugby world.

Overall, observations pointed to a much stronger master-disciple relationship between seniors and beginners than between coaches and beginners – something similar to Sabino's findings in fitness centers, where that bond takes place between bodybuilders and beginners. Seniors have the authority to introduce beginners to the world of rugby as they incorporate

¹² From the field book of August 6, 2011, referring to a trip to play in a town in the state of Santa Catarina.

¹³ In addressing the sexual economy present in relations among fitness centers' clients, Sabino argued that bodybuilders are not women's favorites. Women prefer those the author called veterans, men who have been practicing bodybuilding for some time but do not see it in a competitive way and thereby keep a body that is closer to what women consider beautiful because they "seek the classic form of male beauty, an athletic body without the exaggerated muscle mass" (SABINO, 2000, p. 76). Although Sabino also works with the *veterans* category in the context of fitness centers, we consider that rugby's veterans (seniors) are closer to bodybuilders because of the authority role they play in their respective fields.

“capital made up of a set of effective techniques and actions that become rooted schemes in their sport’s daily life” (SABINO, 2000, p. 87).

But in the case of fitness centers, bodybuilders rival teachers/instructors regarding the effectiveness of some exercises – something that is absent in the researched field in terms of the game’s technical apparatus. During observations, the coach’s work was never questioned by seniors. On the contrary, the group recognizes his importance as the person who plans training and organizes the team, who takes care of technical and tactical details. Ultimately, he legitimizes the team as the authority in charge of improving players’ performance and who, along with seniors, keeps the rugby tradition alive.

4 THE PLACE OF TRADITION: SACRIFICE, THE SPIRIT OF RUGBY, FAMILY AND PROFESSIONALISM

[...] The XV, it is 100% collective. You do nothing by yourself. Nothing. [Speaks with conviction] [...] But it has all the spirit. [Emphasis in her voice]. You risk your life now for your teammate, because at some point he will risk his life for you. And you see that in every moment of the game. Fifteen people struggling to make 50 cm. [...] It’s different. There are 15 in the field, but it’s 22 people there.¹⁴ It’s more people, it’s more unity and, it’s different people and each has their role. The 100-kg girl will have to do a lot of effort so that afterwards a 50-kg girl is able to run more. [...] It feels better. (JOANA)

The words above show that the collective is highly valued in rugby, which may entail the need to sacrifice oneself on behalf of the group. Therefore, the notion of sacrifice gains new dimensions beyond the present moment in sports training, considering that training logic of self-sacrifice – a rationalized process that regulates the level of stress inflicted on the body to adapt better and consequently to enhance body performance.¹⁵ Here, however, sacrifice would that embody unity and *the spirit of rugby*, where the collective must always be above any individual will. According to the native discourse, that spirit was responsible for engagement in and maintenance of rugby practice, for its beauty, in the moral sense, for being fair and aggregating and therefore captivating.

For me [the spirit of rugby] is that friendship. You go, you have an opponent on the field and when you leave the field that opponent grabs your hand, hugs you and [says] “congratulations on your game”. When they win, they applaud our team, [saying] “thank you for coming here and giving us the pleasure of playing rugby, which we all love”. I think that’s the difference from other sports. [...] The opponent [...] is also a lover of the same sport, just as I am. [...] in rugby we have this camaraderie, this good spirit. [...] The guys welcome you in a very nice way. (MARCELA)

And the spirit of rugby seems to outline a sporting tradition that includes not only technical and tactical lessons, but also what is built off the field, away from games and practices. Rugby and its spirit must be lived, as pointed out by one of our respondents, Talita,¹⁶ when she said that one can only understand *the spirit of rugby* from the inside, that is, by experiencing its logic and operation on a daily basis. And this can only be achieved by interacting with other players, with those who share the same codes and preferences, who convey their knowledge to younger ones and exchange experiences with each other. Fraternization moments gain importance in

¹⁴ Total of first- and second-string players.

¹⁵ See, for example, Vaz (1999) and Gonçalves; Turelli and Vaz (2012).

¹⁶ Talita, 23, has played rugby since 2011 and joined Brazil’s national team in 2012.

this context, such as Club parties (June Festival, the party closing the year's activities, the club's anniversary party, etc.), small meetings and team events (such as dinners, lunches or breakfasts at some player's home, or even going to bars and nightclubs together), participation in the championships in which Desterro plays (even when not taking part in disputes, the club's female players go to the field to root for the men's teams, whether adult or youth, sometimes they help organizing the third half or work as referees when there are no specialist¹⁷). In short, socially shared spaces and times end up influencing the team's makeup and, according to the native interpretation, its very performance in the field.

In this context, their relationship with the club is unique, since it becomes, in the routine of those who play rugby, the space for interaction par excellence, even though it "does not exist" as a physical structure, as with Desterro (and most Brazilian rugby clubs, according to our sources). In almost 20 years of existence (it was founded in 1995), it has not had a headquarters or a field to train or play championships, so it has to rent space as needed. That, however, only seems to strengthen ties among its members, since they end up representing the club, and any initiative concerning the organization mobilizes everyone,¹⁸ resulting in what respondents called family.

I fell in love with the game. Then after the first championship, the game itself, on the pitch, but also outside it, the third half [...] And I saw that rugby is really a different sport. I've play every sport, but rugby has: third time, party, everyone is a friend, you get to make friends with people from other teams, something you don't see often in other [sports]. [...] You see it's really a family. The same people have been around since I joined it. (VIVIANE¹⁹)

As Viviane's speech shows us, the club is a family that symbolizes unity and tradition, friendship and camaraderie. According to Saouter (2003), the club family is responsible for the formation of rugbiers, who must be prepared for the game based on the technical and tactical teachings and rugby's peculiar value system. But that family exceeds the limits of the club, involving the whole community created around rugby, which includes players, former practitioners, and especially family members. By the way, as in other highly amateur sports, management often depends largely on the involvement of family members, especially "to organize teams, fundraising, technical preparation [...], tournaments and traveling to championships" (ALMEIDA, 2008, p. 102).

However, the scenario of Brazilian rugby has been gradually changing with the emergence of larger incentives, mostly boosted by its inclusion (in its *sevens* version) in the next Olympic Games to be held in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. As the host country, Brazil already has a guaranteed place and CBRu (the Brazilian Rugby Confederation) has spared no effort to ensure good preparation for the national team. In this context, we see a recent movement towards professionalization of Brazilian players.

The aim of the Brazilian Confederation is to raise the level of Brazilian rugby [speaks seriously] and they tried to follow the same proposal of volleyball, by first strengthening national teams so they can be mirrors. Unlike other sports that start by strengthening their grassroots. [...] We are 20 players in the elite group, in the national team; they talked with all the players to see if they could move to São Paulo, those who live in other places or follow a training plan in their towns for those who can't, and it was

17 Referee training is recent. For a long time, players themselves worked as assistant referees.

18 In club events there is internal organization to decide who will take care of space, which can be a rented place or a member's or relative's home – which is more frequent. Another example is the storage of training equipment, uniforms and trophies, which are under the responsibility of a person, once it has been properly decided within the group.

19 Viviane: 32, has practiced rugby since 2000, and was part of the first national team, together with Marcela, in 2001. She is still active in the group.

decided that they would professionalize 12 girls. Eight of them centralized, who will live in São Paulo or already live in São Paulo and will be able to be totally devoted to it. 'Totally' means mornings and afternoons [...] It's really a profession. [...] The aim of centralizing is focusing on physical preparation with a qualified fitness coach, who will be with us all day. It's different when you train by yourself. Then physical evolution will be demanded. [...] The aim is really to evolve. There will be one-year contracts. [...] We never asked for professionalization; we always thought that we could progress, but we are hopeful to improve our level. (JOANA)

But professionalization is still not consensual among practitioners. Not all of our respondents seemed to be sure that it will be a wise initiative, because while it is important to develop the sport, it can be harmful to the *spirit of rugby* as well as detrimental to the development of the clubs. According to them, the first problem is that the development of the women's national team seems to happen at the expense of clubs, with a reversal in incentives (valuing the top of the pyramid over the bottom). That is obviously a choice made by sports officials who take care of rugby in the country, something that is clear to our respondents, but that does not reduce discontent regarding the process. Perhaps that initiative will generate new attitudes, and players will choose the national team²⁰ over clubs, weakening one of the characteristics that make up the ethos of amateur rugby: love for the club.

Another issue resulting from that refers to half-developed professionalization, because only an elite of the sport (who have time and money²¹ to devote to it, to pay club fees, trips and other activities required to maintain a good performance, such as fitness centers, for example) can ascend to the professional – or semiprofessional – level, as they stand out among the other players. Moreover, the players we interviewed did not criticize exactly professionalization itself, but rather the way it has been developed, with little support to clubs and focus on the national team, which, in turn, does not have the best training conditions to achieve its goals either.

This is still a new issue in Brazilian rugby and it seems to challenge or at least question the amateur practice discourse. We must be aware of the new scenarios generated by professionalization that will certainly establish another dynamic in Brazilian rugby, which may even lead to change in ways of playing, because, according to the native speech, disputes will tend to be fiercer and friendship and chivalry may be lost amid the hunger for victory. The sphere itself advocates, albeit ambiguously, an anachronistic dynamics – that of sport free of any pecuniary interest, as if it were crucial to preserve positive values. The exclusion that historically resulted from amateurism – causing rugby to reject, in practice, lower class workers and ethnic minorities – with the exception of women's participation in sports, remains as current as unobserved.

5 BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

As we have seen, rugby has been played by gentlemen and amateurs who have been doing it for fun and passion since the nineteenth century. Such features are still present in the twenty-first century, as we have seen in our study of a women's team. The ideals of fair play must

20 About it, Joana told us: "[...] nowadays, many girls in the clubs aspire to be in the national team, but you have to make it in your club first and then think of something else. Many girls there in Desterro already think about being in the national team without thinking about being first-string players in Desterro" [Laughs].

21 In addition to paying fees (which cover small expenses such as coaches' expenses (men's adult, youth and women's adult, there are extra expenses on competitions (registration, accommodation, transportation, food etc.), individual training material (cleats, socks, rugby shorts, etc.) and physical preparation carried out in addition to regular training. Since 2013 the women's Desterro team has the supervision of a fitness coach who is also a player of the club and prescribes individual exercises for each player. Those professional are paid separately and individually by each player.

be kept on the pitch, always respecting the rules, the opponent and the referee's authority. Off the pitch, an honorable and noble posture must be promoted, as well as moments of fellowship and sociability such as the famous and traditional third half, when teams gather to celebrate rugby and show that possible differences are confined only to the match's 80 (or 14)²² minutes.

Despite rugby's gradual professionalization, which dates back to the second half of the 1990s in the international arena,²³ the amateur ethos still prevails in the identity of those who are dedicated to rugby, who practice it for fun, merely as a sport, where the practice focuses on the pleasure of playing and living among peers. Semi-professionalization, present only in the national team, reproduces at local level, though still incipiently, the international division between professional and amateur.

As one of the last remnants of amateur sport, rugby often seems to fight contemporary sports' trend towards professionalization, which has generated much controversy, especially in Brazil, where the discussion has just arrived in rugby, being new in the country. If a residual amateurism resisted the end of the Cold War, when Warsaw Pact countries still proclaimed it, contemporary spectacle no longer offers chances for its continuity.

The emphasis on amateurism is anachronistic; it is a moment of assertion by sectors that resist liberalism and are committed to keeping rugby restricted to society's middle or upper layers. Desterro's players somehow express that in their financial ability to maintain the club and its activities, their university education and their time available for sport. Free of market dictates, amateur rugby remains, however, as the distinguishing device.

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²² Eighty minutes in the XV version and 14 in *sevens*.

²³ Since 1995 the IRB (International Rugby Board) declared rugby as an "open" sport, removing the mandatory requirement for amateur players and flexibilizing payments and contracts. That decision was probably made because of the organization's difficulty to control the maintenance of amateurism.

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