

Sport as War or a Means to Peace?

Thomas Hobbes' Laws of Nature

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Abstract

The work of 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes found in Leviathan is used to explain the motivation for antisocial and harmful behavior observed in human beings and particularly in modern sport. According to Hobbes, individuals, by nature, are self-serving. This leads them to engage in behavior that results in a state of continual conflict, which he referred to as a state of war. Hobbes believed adherence to the laws of Nature is necessary to create a condition of peace. In the current paper Hobbes' laws of Nature are utilized to provide modern competitors with guidelines for behavior that foster a condition of peace instead of war. They also serve as a guide for achieving peace in the general global society.

Keywords: Sport, conflict, violence, cheating, peace, Hobbes, laws of nature, natural law.

In the aftermath of competitive situations there are victors and the vanquished. Such is true in sport, as well as life's other competitive circumstances. The existence of better and worse, and of winners and losers, is the nature of things when human beings measure one against the other. It has been said that competition brings out the best in us all. However, in competition, the ugly side of being human is frequently displayed for all to behold. In the wake of those who cause strife, cheat, and harm others in pursuit of success, are observed waves of pain and suffering that make turbulent the waters of eternity.

How human beings behave toward one another as they strive toward athletic success and how they respond to competitive outcomes does not always serve as a positive force in the lives of participants or the broader society. For example, I have witnessed and experienced the following over my thirty-seven year coaching career:

- Physical altercations took place between teammates.
- Physical assaults were made in retaliation to verbal or physical assaults issued by opposing athletes, some which resulted in lacerations, concussions, and broken limbs.
- Coaches, athletes, and fans questioned and verbally assaulted referees.
- Athletes broke verbal promises and valid written contracts.
- Athletes and coaches on the same team verbally demeaned and degraded one another.
- Coaches physically assaulted their own players.
- Opposing coaches engaged in physical altercations.
- Players, coaches and fans spewed profanity and racial slurs.
- Fans physically attacked officials and coaches.
- A coach was pummeled with trash following a playoff basketball game.
- A coach was threatened with death by an angry parent who had to be restrained.

The list could, unfortunately, go on. Rarely have I witnessed a competitive event that was not marred by conflict and ugliness of one form or another. Even soccer matches for four year olds can be emotionally charged events marked by screaming, crying, cursing, reactive violence, and abuse of officials. Attend a few.

See and hear for yourself. Why are individuals seemingly inclined to engage in harmful and antisocial behavior within competitive situations? Why is sport rife with unnecessary conflict, injustice, arrogance, pride, and inequity? It is postulated in the present paper that harmful and antisocial behavior observed in sport is a basic and primal aspect of being human. In the quest to serve the self, engaging in harmful and antisocial behavior is simply something natural, something innate.

Thomas Hobbes described the natural state of humans in his classic work *Leviathan*, first published in 1651 (Hobbes, 1907). His deduction was that the natural state of man is a state of conflict, which he referred to as a “state of war.” He believed the alternative to the state of war and the means to peace between individuals could be found in adherence to what he termed the “laws of Nature.” In this paper, the works of Hobbes will be used to explain why human beings naturally live in a state of conflict (war), the consequences of living in a state of war, the essence of the laws of Nature, and the role of reflection in discernment of the laws of Nature. Finally, the laws of Nature identified by Hobbes will be applied to the sporting environment in an effort to illustrate how one may compete in sport and contribute to the creation of a wholesome and positive competitive environment.¹ If, indeed, the lessons learned on the playing field are preparation for life, one may consider applying Hobbes’ laws of Nature in the competitive sports environment as a means to making the world a better place within which to live.

Human Beings Naturally Live in a State of War

Because people are inclined to serve their own needs and desires, they contemplate and engage in actions that create conflict, thus alienating themselves from others. This, according to Hobbes (1907), results in their experiencing a perpetual state of conflict, which he referred to as a “state of war.” Hobbes believed that human beings experience conflict and live within this war-state with others for three reasons, “first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory” (Hobbes, 1907, p. 80). All are extant within the sporting environment.

Competition

In life, the game that is played is survival of the fittest. Fitness is displayed by the successful conquest. The meat is brought to the table. The mate is taken. Children are propagated and raised to adulthood. The means by which this game is won are irrelevant. What must be done to live, reproduce, and have what one desires must be done without regard for others. On the *most basic level*, concern for others serves as an impediment to achieving one’s goals. In the competitive situation, individuals are *inclined* to do anything within their power to achieve their goals, regardless of the impact their actions have upon others. There can be only one victor. Competition, therefore, does not always bring out the best in human behavior. It can illuminate the darker, self-serving side for all to see.

Diffidence

In the natural state, timid and powerless individuals seldom find success and happiness. Often the powerful feel entitled to mistreat and abuse the weak as they seek to serve their own interests and desires. The mistreated harbor pain, resentment, and bitterness. Conflict reigns. Attention and riches are lavished upon successful athletes and coaches.

In response, they may demonstrate hubris and expect special treatment from others because of their athletic success. Many parade about with a haughty attitude, carrying an informally administered license to engage in self-serving behavior at the expense of others.

How many star athletes are allowed to behave badly at practices and in competitive events? How many students have been stuffed into lockers and trashcans by the hands of the athletic elite? How many have suffered the pain and humiliation of hazing governed by athletes? How many successful coaches expect special treatment? How many coaches expect for athletes to be grateful simply to be in their presence and to respond unquestioningly to their every whim? Why do athletes and coaches perpetuate these negative attitudes and behaviors? They do so partly out of tradition, but primarily because they feel entitled to. Who will dare to stop them?

Glory

Glory may be afforded individuals as a consequence of fame, wealth and privilege. What harms will individuals spurn in their struggle to achieve wealth, fame and privilege? What unethical and hurtful acts do individuals wholeheartedly committed to athletic victory shun as they seek to obtain or maintain these terrestrial rewards?

The Consequences of Living in a State of War

According to Hobbes (1907), because human beings naturally live in a condition of war, they fight for survival, well-being, and the desires of their heart. This, “state of nature is a miserable state of war in which none of our important human ends are reliably realized” (Lloyd, 2008, ¶ 12). Hobbes (1907) believed that when human beings are living in the natural state, peace with others is not possible, “Competition of riches, honour, command, or other power inclineth to contention, enmity, and war; because the way of one competitor to the attaining of his desire, is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repel the other” (p. 62).

In the natural state, what is moral is what pleases the individual and his or her own interest. Hobbes observed that, “So long as a man is in the condition of mere nature, which is a condition of war, private appetite is the measure of good and evil” (Hobbes, p. 104). All that can be done to assure achievement of one’s goals shall be done. Concepts of civil behavior hold no sway over the actions of individuals in the natural condition. Hobbes (1907) declared, “To this war of every man against every man this is also consequent: that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place” (p. 82).

Injustices are frequently observed in sport and other competitive settings because individuals understand that they are competing *against* others instead of competing *with* them. When athletes view opponents as obstacles to success instead of facilitators of excellence, the stage is set for the condition of war to permeate the contest. If human beings are to be victorious *at any cost*, restraint cannot be shown in the heat of competition, restraint is dysfunctional. Glory comes only to the victor. The opponent is to be vanquished through any means possible. The words of boxer Tavoris Cloud capture the essence of this view of competition (Fitzsimmons, 2009):

My goal is to destroy my opponent by any means necessary, to inflict enough pain to make him quit or to have someone come in and take mercy on him. That's the way I do it and I think the people love it. (¶ 22)

Often, antisocial actions are taken in the pursuit of victory. Cheating, the use of instrumental violence, the use of illegal drugs, and a host of injurious behaviors are employed because they can assist competitors in the achievement of victory.

Appreciation of the negative consequences antisocial behaviors have on others seems to be absent in the heat of competition and quest for success. If the creation of a peaceful state is not a concern in competitive situations, individuals will seek their own success and edification at the expense of others. When competitors cheat, injure, seek revenge, and declare hatred for opponents through word or deed, a condition of war is created.

Conflict reigns. The competitive event becomes a dog-eat-dog situation that illuminates the very worst in humankind. What good can come off from it?

The Essence of the Laws of Nature

Laws of Nature (*lex naturalis*) are precepts or rules of behavior that, when adhered to, terminate the natural state of war and foster a condition of peace. According to Hobbes (1907), the laws of Nature are eternal and unchanging:

The laws of Nature are immutable and eternal; for injustice, ingratitude, arrogance, pride, iniquity, acceptance of persons, and the rest can never be made lawful. For it can never be that war shall preserve life, and peace destroy it. (p. 103)

Hobbes (1907) classified behavior in agreement with the laws of Nature as, “decency of behaviour” (p. 61). He was not referring to behaviors such as, “...how one man should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth, or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of the small morals...” (p. 61). He was concerned with behavior that leads to peace and unity between all members of society.

The Role of Reflection and Discernment of the Laws of Nature

Hobbes (1907) believed that individuals with a properly functioning mind (wit) are able to determine what behavior is proper and desirable through the use of reason. A reasonable-thinking individual would observe that conflict is bad and peace is good. Reflection leads one to understand what behaviors minimize conflict and lead to a condition of peace (Lloyd, 2008). If human beings understand what sparks their own passions, hopes, fears and opinions, they may be able to understand the thoughts and passions of others experiencing similar circumstances. Hobbes (1907) encouraged individuals to, “Nosce teipsum, Read thyself” (p. vi) in an effort to discern moral behavior.

The coach and athlete can reflect upon their sport experience and determine what makes them angry, what motivates them to seek revenge, what compels them to verbally or physically assault others. They can determine what makes them feel as though they have been treated unjustly. If they understand the causes of their feelings, they are empowered to choose behavior that is fair and just to all. They are able to choose actions that may foster a condition of peace instead of a state of war. The absence of reflective behavior can result in individuals perpetually acting in a manner that serves the self; and that which is *reactive* instead of *reasoned*. Hobbes (1907) believed that most humans agree upon what acceptable behaviors are. If an individual is behaving inappropriately, others will often let that individual know. Upon reflection, the offending party may come to understand what behavior is wrong and why.

Hobbes (1907) observed:

For all men by nature reason alike, and well, when they have good principles. For who is so stupid as both to mistake in geometry, and also to persist in it, when another detects his error to him? (p. 25)

How many have heard children call others cheaters on the playground? How many have heard the words, “That’s not fair?” Young people have a sense of fairness and justice that is applied to sport and childhood games. A notion exists that we should treat others fairly and when we do not, others complain. When individuals choose not to play fairly, who really wants to play with them? Who wants to be dehumanized by a coach or abused in the name of sporting success? Do not the victimized communicate their fears and pain? Hobbes (1907) believed strongly that human beings must determine correct behavior through their own thought and not by relying on the guidance of others alone.

He warned that to engage in behavior simply because other individuals do so is a faulty and dangerous practice:

He that takes up conclusions on the trust of authors and doth not fetch them from the first items in every reckoning..., loses his labour, and does not know anything, but only believeth. (p. 23)

Human beings influence one another. If athletes are told to break a rule and that it is acceptable to do so, perhaps they will believe it to be so. If athletes are told that victory is more important than anything else, perhaps they will accept the proposition as true. Hobbes (1907) suggested that people should determine for themselves, through reflection, what behavior is right and wrong in order to determine what behavior leads to a condition of peace. Reflection directs the right-thinking individual to the laws of Nature and a condition of peace.

The Laws of Nature That Bring Human Beings a State of Peace

How can coaches and athletes compete in a way that result in a condition of peace? Below, several of the laws of Nature identified by Hobbes (1907) are identified and applied to the competitive sport setting in order to illustrate how conflict is created and how it can be avoided.

Seek Peace and Follow it

The first law of Nature is to seek peace and follow it. To do otherwise is to live in the natural state, which leads to a life of continual conflict and strife. Individuals cannot find peace when they are focused solely upon their desires and when they seek to obtain them regardless of the means utilized or the consequences others may experience. Hobbes (1907) astutely observed, "For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing anything he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war" (p. 84). Individuals may choose to do anything and everything in order to achieve fame, honor and riches in the interest of personal satisfaction and edification. Although human beings are able to kill, injure, steal, or lie in the pursuit of their desires, they should not. Self-serving actions have consequences. The victimized are angered as they are cheated, belittled and injured. They harbor animosity and ill will that can result in retaliatory acts. Harmful and unfair actions made on courts and fields disrupt peace and create a "state of war". Contestants who choose to engage in antisocial behaviors within the sport context do not allow for a condition of peace to exist.

Is not peace, ultimately, something every person desires? Even individuals who war with others ultimately desire peace. They just mistakenly believe that if only the last conquest can be achieved, that peace will come.

If peace is believed to come through conquest, victory, glory, wealth, or praise, one believes a lie. How many victories and conquests are enough? How much glory, wealth, and praise are sufficient?

In sport, if individuals are to compete in a manner that leads to peace, they must be willing to give up their freedom to mistreat an opponent. They must seek peace. To do so is wise, for victory and its resultant benefits cannot provide lasting peace and satisfaction.

Perform Covenants Made

Justice depends upon the existence of a covenant. When a covenant has been broken, injustice is evidenced and a state of war is created. Hobbes (1907) observed, "But when a covenant is made, then to break it is 'unjust'; and the definition of 'injustice' is no other than 'the not performance of covenant'" (p. 93). Formal and informal covenants exist in sport. Formal covenants come in the shape of formalized playing rules. When rules are broken, those cheated are justifiably angered and, at times, may respond in unfortunate ways. They may cry. They may curse. They may complain to others and stir up strife. They may respond to the disruption of peace with violence.

They may engage in an act of war because an act of war was imposed upon them. Informal rules also exist in the form of convention associated with specific sport contexts. For example, some basketball officials allow higher degrees of physical contact than others allow. Umpires have strike zones that vary. Athletes, coaches and fans must understand and adapt to these variations within differing sport contexts if discord and confrontations are to be avoided.

Covenants are made between coaches and players as well as between members of a team. Coaches may make promises to athletes that, if not kept, cause disappointment, frustration and anger. Athletes may agree to follow training rules or promise to work to their ability at all times. When these promises are broken, the coach and team members are rightfully frustrated and angered. Athletes may promise to support one another and when they discover that they compete against one another for playing time, they fail to follow through with their promises. Covenants are broken and peace is disrupted. Adherence to the letter and the spirit of rules governing a sport decreases the probability of a negative and hostile environment. Adapting to the peculiarities associated with a specific sports context also reduces the probability of unnecessary conflict. Any and all formal and informal covenants made as participants navigate the waters of competition should be honored in the interest of peace.

Individuals Should Strive to Accommodate Themselves to Others

Peace cannot exist if tolerance, acceptance, and a willingness to acquiesce to the wishes and needs of others are not present. Individuals should be willing to accommodate themselves to others in the interest of peace. "The observers of this law may be called 'sociable', the Latins call them *commodi*; the contrary, 'stubborn', 'insociable', 'forward', 'intractable'" (Hobbes, p. 99). In order for peace to exist between athletes and between players and coaches, understanding, acceptance and, acquiescence must exist. Those new to a group must make an effort to bring their behaviors more in line with the expectations of coaches and teammates. Eccentricities of each individual, to some degree, must be understood and accepted by members of the established group and its coaches. There must be some give and take concerning expectations for behavior.

When team cohesion is low, the athletic experience is impoverished. When coaches are abrasive and abusive to athletes, the athletic experience is less enjoyable. In both situations, conflicts and confrontations are high. Intractable attitudes reflective of self-centeredness create a condition of war. The law of Nature requires that self-centered concern be abandoned in the interest of peace. Those who demand their way create a state of war. They are resented, scorned and detested. They stir up strife and discontentment. There is no peace in their presence.

When Someone Repents, They should be forgiven. To Pardon is to Grant Peace.

At times, human beings commit wrong against one another unintentionally; and at others times, wrongs are committed intentionally. When wrong is done to another individual, an apology is needed if peace is to be restored.

It is incumbent upon the individual who was harmed to accept the sincere apology. Hobbes (1907) postulated that failure to do so results in the continuation of the state of war:

For 'pardon' is nothing but granting of peace, which, though granted to them that persevere in their hostility, be not peace, but fear; yet not granted to them that give caution of the future time is sign of an aversion to peace, and therefore contrary to the law of Nature. (p. 99)

When apologies are made in the sport setting, the offended individual may choose to accept or reject the apology. How many times does an athlete extend a hand to help up a fallen opponent only to see the gesture disdainfully rejected? How many times do athletes rebuff the sincere apologies of the opponent who has caused physical harm?

How many coaches offer an athlete an apology only to have it rejected? How does one feel when a sincere apology is overtly rejected? The state of war continues. Some individuals may be incapable of accepting an apology because of their wounded pride and ignorance of the truth. Rejection of an apology is reflective of weakness of character, though the obstinate believe it to reflect strength. Gandhi observed, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." To the one who has made a sincere apology only to have it discarded, this outlook may provide comfort and restoration of a personal condition of peace. The acceptance of an apology allows for the restoration of peace. Rejection of an apology made indicates that thoughts of ill will, anger, and revenge linger. The state of war continues.

Do not Seek Revenge

Hobbes (1907) suggested that those wounded by another look past the transgression and forward to a better time. Thoughts of revenge do not allow for peace to exist within the mind of the offended:

A seventh [law] is this, 'that in revenges', that is, retribution of evil for evil, 'men look not at the greatness of the evil past but the greatness of the good to follow'. Whereby we are forbidden to inflict punishment with any other design than for correction of the offender, or direction of others. (p. 99)

Acts of revenge generally result in retaliatory acts of revenge. The desire for revenge has no end unless someone chooses to end it by denying its call. A hard foul is made during a soccer match. The recipient is enraged and plots to foul an opponent in retaliation. Peace does not exist. A pitched ball hits a batter and the stricken player's teammate plans, as an act of revenge and convention, to "bean" the first batter in the next half of the inning. Peace does not exist. Bench-clearing brawls take place as a consequence of consecutive acts of revenge. When opponents next meet, thoughts of strife and continued acts of war are brought with them. The desire for revenge seemingly has no end.

When do acts of revenge taken in the name of honor and convention cease? Those bent upon revenge are blind to the fact that revenge is a never-ending, evil proposition. Clinging to thoughts of revenge and engaging in an act of "sweet" revenge never serve to create a condition of peace. It is contrary to the law of Nature.

Do not Express Hatred or Contempt for Others

The law of Nature prohibits individuals from declaring hatred for others through gestures, words or deeds. When it is made known that one is hated and held in contempt, a state of war is created. According to Hobbes (1907), peace cannot exist where hatred and contempt has been declared:

And because all signs of hatred, or contempt, provoke to fight; insomuch as most men choose rather to hazard their life than not to be revenged, we may in the eighth place, for a law of nature, set down this precept: that no man by deed, word, countenance, or gesture, declare hatred or contempt of another. (p. 100)

Coaches may breed contempt for opponents as evidenced by the sainted American football coach Vince Lombardi's statement, "To play this game you must have fire in you, and there is nothing that stokes fire like hate" (Goheen, 2003, ¶17). It is hypothesized that the desire to win and one's performance are intensified when the opponent is hated. Though such an attitude may assist in the achievement of victory, is not the competitor harboring such an attitude more likely to engage in harmful behavior before, during, and after the competition? When hatred and contempt are declared, actions are more likely to be taken and words more likely to be spoken that disrupt peace and create a condition of war. Is it not easier to harm those who have declared hatred and contempt for us?

The use of trash talking and taunting, though commonly accepted in sport, at times become a means by which athletes convey contempt for one another. Trash talking and taunting can become mean-spirited and serve as the spark that leads to violence between competitors. Hateful words spoken are as flaming arrows. They ignite a raging fire. The law of Nature prohibits competitors from declaring hatred and contempt for opponents through gestures, words, or deeds. Peace cannot exist when hatred and contempt are declared.

Acknowledge Others as Our Equals

The law of Nature requires every individual to acknowledge others as their equal. Failure to acknowledge others as their equal leads to a condition of conflict. The individual who has deemed him or herself superior to others feels licensed to mistreat them. In the interest of peace, individual should not even consider whether or not they are superior to others. Hobbes (1907) stated, "The question of who is a better man has no place if all men are equal" (p. 100). It is a fact that some individuals are gifted in areas that others are not. Some have radiant beauty, superior mathematical skills, or incredible athletic ability. When individuals believe they are superior to others in one area of their life, they may mistakenly come to believe that they are more important than others. Those who believe themselves to be superior to others do so because of their pride. Pride serves as a license to mistreat others in the interest of the self.

The law of Nature requires all human beings to understand that superiority in one area of life does not make a person more important or more valuable than those of lesser ability. When athletic success is believed to demonstrate that one human being is better on a basic, fundamental, and spiritual level, the truth is distorted and conflicts are inevitable. The stage is set for a condition of war to exist.

No Individual Should Expect Special Benefits or Entitlements

Athletes often grow to believe that they are special. Attention is lavished upon them, especially if they are successful. They may develop a sense of entitlement. They can grow to feel as though they are superior to others and therefore entitled to preferential treatment. Hobbes would take issue with athletes believing that they are entitled to special treatment.

He stated, no individual should, "...reserve to himself any right which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest" (Hobbes, p. 100). The expectation of preferential treatment is contrary to the law of Nature. Aside from being skilled in sport, athletes may not be special at all. Many a high school star is cast aside as they approach college and the brilliance of those who play in college is lost as their collegiate careers come to a close. Sport, the thing that may have made them special, may not serve to make them a productive individual in life. If they did not learn to work well with others, they cannot.

If they have not developed their minds, they may not land good jobs or earn a decent wage. They may falsely believe that they are above the law and justice. The athlete who has nothing else to offer society may be pitied.

The ancient Greeks conveyed pity for athletes who were nothing more. The following words of the poet Euripides (480-406 B.C.) serve well as a reminder (Symonds, 1879):

Of all the thousand ills that prey on Hellas
Not one is greater than the tribe of athletes;
For, first, they never learn how to live well,
Nor indeed could they; seeing that a man
Slave to his jaws and belly, cannot hope
To heap up wealth superior to his sire's.
How to be poor and row in fortune's boat
They know no better for they have not learned
Manners that make men proof against ill luck.
Lustrous in youth, they lounge like living statues
Decking the streets, but when sad old age comes,
They fall and perish like a threadbare coat. (p. 283-284)

Athletic prowess does not justify preferential treatment. In the end, who really cares how good of an athlete an individual was in youth sport, high school, or in college once their playing days are over? How many young athletes are unaware of the athletic exploits of legendary athletes such as Carl Lewis, Ben Hogan, Sandy Koufax, Bill Russell, Larry Bird or Wayne Gretzky? For most human beings, athletic achievements are as a wind that sweeps undetected through an ageless and uninhabited desert.

Things that Cannot Be Divided Equally Should Be Shared in Common

The law of Nature requires that if something cannot be divided that it should be shared in common (Hobbes, 1907). It is impossible to share a victory equally with an opponent. A winner and a loser are declared at the completion of the competition. What can be shared equitably is a desirable and uplifting competitive experience.

The vanquished, in defeat, may have excelled as the victor was pushed to individual greatness. Good can be found in such a state. The victor may sincerely believe that the opponent was worthy and that the contest made each better because of the opportunity to have competed. Both the victor and defeated may appreciate the skills of one another and find that they have both competed hard, as equals. Animosity, hatred and certain conflict are not found at the conclusion of such an event. Rules have been followed, conventions adhered to and fairness has reigned. The opportunity to compete equally has been provided. Once the disappointment of a loss has subsided, a state of peace can exist in the mind of the defeated. The victor may have peace in victory.

Contrarily, when rules and regulations are not followed, when intentional violence causes harm, when demeaning and hateful words are exchanged, and when an opponent is humiliated, the vanquished may certainly feel animosity and hatred toward the victor. The opportunity to compete equitably has been denied. The law of Nature is violated and conflict is likely. Peace will not exist.

Those at Controversy Should Accept the Judgment of an Arbitrator

Hobbes (1907) stated, “And, seeing every man is presumed to do all things in order to his own benefit, no man is a fit arbitrator in his own cause...” (p. 102). Only an individual who is not affected by a decision can make a fair decision.

The law of Nature requires that when individuals are at controversy (in competition); an arbitrator is needed to make sound judgments. In sport, the arbitrators are judges and referees, who will be referred to below as officials. Officials are commonly associated with sports contests. They are necessary because the desire to succeed often taints one’s perceptions and judgments during competition. An unbiased observer is needed to make a correct call or judgment.

It is disappointing to see athletes, coaches, and fans question the judgment of officials. Officials are *needed* and when they are questioned, a negative and hostile environment is often created. Sadly, even when an official makes a correct call, half of the participants and observers believe the call was incorrect! In sport, it is impossible for an official to get every call correct. Perceptions at times differ from reality. An official’s position on a court or field may prevent him or her from seeing an action from the same angle as a coach, player, or fan.

It should be accepted that sometimes calls are missed or incorrectly made. When officials do make an incorrect call, their humanness and fallibility are demonstrated. Officials, who are surely human, will error. Forgiveness restores peace. Parents, athletes, coaches, and fans that hold a grudge against an official for calls made in the past live in a state of war because they cannot accept the fallibility and humanness of the officials. They are unable to see that they may have made the same mistake under the same conditions. They do not recognize that officials are needed. They create a condition of war evidenced by their expressed anger and frustration.

Judges Must Deal Equally With All

It is incumbent upon officials that they be fair and impartial. Hobbes (1907) stated, “Also if ‘a man be trusted to judge between man and man’, it is a precept of the law of Nature that he deal equally between them” (p. 101). If officials are intentionally unfair in their judgments, the contest is tainted. A state of war is created through the intentional and unfair act of the official. Officials should enthusiastically receive regular training and evaluation in an effort to improve their knowledge and interpretation of the rules, their mechanics, and ability to interact effectively with coaches and athletes. They should reflect upon the causes of missed calls and improper decisions in an effort to prevent similar errors in the future. Officials found to actually favor one opponent over another should be summarily eliminated from the officiating pool. Officials can assist in the achievement of peace by acting impartially, enhancing their knowledge of the rules, and by improving their mechanics. They also contribute to a condition of peace by treating athletes, coaches, and fans with respect and sensitivity.

Judges Should Be Protected From Harm as They Perform Their Duties

Society needs officials to make decisions. If their safety is jeopardized, they cannot be expected to serve society effectively.

In extreme cases, individuals will refuse to serve as officials for fear of their safety. Hobbes (1907) believed that the safety of judges is vital to the ability to perform their duties:

It is also a law of Nature 'that all men that mediate peace he allowed safe conduct'. For the law that commandeth peace, as the end, commandeth intercession, as the 'means'; and to intercession the means is safe conduct. (p. 102)

When the judgments of officials are contrary to the views of athletes, coaches and fans, the environment may become hostile as they shower officials with verbal abuse. At times, coaches, players and fans become violent when they disagree with the decisions of officials.

According to Bob Still, spokesman for The National Association of Sports Officials, their organization received between one and three reports of criminal assaults on referees each week (Nevius, 2000). A Google web search conducted by the Author on October 11, 2009 for the term "referee attacked" yielded 21.5 million results. A search for the term "referee killed" yielded 616,000 results. Although all results did not reflect actual attacks upon, or murders of sports officials, many did. Referees have too often been attacked following youth, high school, college and professional sporting events.

Questioning of officials often leads to frustration, anger, and in some cases, violence. It should be eliminated from sport if a wholesome environment is to be created. When it is clear that crowds may become hostile or unruly, appropriate security measures should be taken to prevent officials from being harmed. Such steps must be taken if peace is to be maintained and the law of Nature followed. Ensuring the safety of officials is a requisite if individuals are to be willing to serve as officials at all.

The Golden Rule and Peace

Sport as it is currently played and mediated was unknown to Hobbes as he wrote *Leviathan*. Though his laws of Nature were not written to guide proper action in sport, they may serve as a basis from which modern contestants may live and compete in a condition of peace. Hobbes (1907) believed that the golden rule, "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you" captured the essence of the laws of Nature and what each individual should strive to do in the creation of a peaceful society:

Do not that to another which thou wildest not have done to thyself, which showeth him that he has no more to do in learning the laws of nature but, when weighing the actions of other men with his own they seem too heavy, to put them into the other part of the balance, and his own into their place, that his own passions and self-love may add nothing to the weight; and then there is none of these laws of Nature that will not appear unto him very reasonable. (p. 103)

If coaches, fans, and athletes would treat others in the competitive environment as they would want to be treated, their behavior would indeed lead to a more positive, wholesome, and safer competitive environment. Do athletes and coaches want to be cheated? Do they wish to be intentionally injured? Do they wish to be cursed at and belittled? If not, they should not intentionally injure, curse or belittle others. When they choose not to, they adhere to the laws of Nature. When athletes and coaches choose to forgive instead of harboring ill feelings, when they accept apologies given, when they realize that officials are needed and choose to forgive their mistakes, the laws of Nature are adhered to.

Sport can be played as wars are fought. All means taken to assure victory can be employed. The consequence is creation of a perpetual state of war and a competitive environment reflective of the worst in human kind, resulting in pain, suffering, humiliation, and destruction.

The individual who wars with others is doomed to a life of eternal discontent and conflict. If asked how one should compete in sport or the game of life, Hobbes would implore opponents to reflect upon what is good and true, to know themselves, and to treat others as they would wish to be treated. Doing so leads to the creation a wholesome sport environment that prepares youths for effective living as adults. Doing so assists in the creation of a condition of peace within each individual as well as within society.

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Author's Note

1. The laws of Nature not discussed in this paper were the second, fourth, and thirteenth. "The second, ...by all means we can to defend ourselves" (Hobbes, 1907, p. 84), was not included because the cases in which individuals are required to defend themselves from violence and murder are rare in sport. I have no recollection of any report criticizing an athlete, coach or official for having done so. The fourth law of nature was not included. Hobbes expressed it so, "...a man which receive benefit from another of mere grace endeavour that he which giveth it have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will" (Hobbes, 1907, p. 98). Gifts, such as hunting rights, money and the like are not often given by the rich and powerful in sport to those with little power or standing. In cases that they are offered, few, I believe, would refuse them. Hobbes' thirteenth law of nature states, "But some things there are that can neither be divided nor enjoyed in common. Then, the law of Nature which prescribeth equity, requireth 'that the entire right, or else making the use alternate the first possession, be determined by lot' (Hobbes, 1907, p. 101). This law is applied in the NBA basketball lottery, but not in any real way for competitors in a regular contest.