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A PHILOSOPHER LOOKS AT SPORT

Why is sport so important among participants and spectators when its goals seem so pointless? Stephen Mumford's book introduces the reader to a host of philosophical topics found in sport, and argues that sports activities reflect diverse human experiences – including important values that we continue to contest. The author explores physicality, competition, how sport is best defined, ethics in sport and issues of inclusion such as disability sports, the gender divide and transgender athletes. His book is written for anyone who is thoughtful, a sports enthusiast, or both, and will deepen our understanding of sport and its place in our lives. This new series offers short and personal perspectives by expert thinkers on topics that we all encounter in our everyday lives.

STEPHEN MUMFORD is Professor of Metaphysics at Durham University. He is the author of numerous books, including *Watching Sport: Aesthetics, Ethics and Emotion* (2011), *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction* (2012), and *Football: The Philosophy Behind the Game* (2019).

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PREFACE

This is the first book that I wrote during the Covid-19 lockdown and I hope that it is the last. The pandemic gave many of us a pause for reflection and, at least in that respect, it was a good time to write a book. Various degrees of disruption entered our lives and those for whom it was only an inconvenience were the lucky ones. Among the inconveniences was the almost total suspension of sport around the world. This placed me in the unprecedented position of thinking about sport at a time when there was none: the first time this has happened since both sport and the philosophy of sport existed.

A pause for thought is a welcome thing, usually, and the dreadful circumstances gave us all a rare opportunity to consider what is truly important in life. Many reported an intense renewed focus as we battled with crisis, mortality and trauma. Does sport emerge with an increased or diminished importance from these calamitous events? That was one of the questions at the forefront of my mind as I composed the chapters herein. I hope readers will find a few surprises and appreciate the context that generated them. Covid-19 will change the world. We will not return to the old normal. Will it, then, also change sport? I believe that it will. It is incumbent on us now to articulate new visions of how the world could be, and that should include a new vision of sport. There is an interpretive question of what

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currently sport is. There is now also a more pressing political question of what sport should be. I hope that the topics covered in this book encourage and make a positive contribution to that discussion.

I have been assisted in my thinking, and pushed in unexpected and welcome directions, by Sheree Bekker, who also read and commented on the whole manuscript. I am indebted for this guidance. My thanks also to Hilary Gaskin who first suggested that I write this book. I would like to thank my colleagues at Durham who have provided a perfect working environment, even during lockdown. Finally, my gratitude goes to my family for their support, especially during the time of my own lengthy and difficult recovery from suspected Covid-19.