

Study on Legal Disputes over Audience Behavior in Sports Events

-- Taking the Olympic Table Tennis Fan Circle Incident as an Example

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ABSTRACT

A strong country is a strong country. The public's attention to sports is not only reflected in personal fitness and exercise, but also in their attention to sports events. The recently concluded 2024 Paris Olympics has aroused the enthusiasm of the whole nation for the Olympics. The live broadcasts of various events have remained popular and are very popular. In addition to the lively atmosphere, there are also chaotic fan circles. This article focuses on the phenomenon of the Olympic Chinese table tennis fan circle, studies the improper behavior of the audience on social media and on-site viewing, puts forward corresponding legal regulations and governance suggestions, and makes a statement of view for the healthier development of sports events.

KEYWORDS

Sports; Olympic Games; Audience Behavior; Legal Disputes.

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Sports level is an important indicator of national development and social progress. It represents a country's comprehensive national strength and social civilization, and is a national soft power with profound influence. Paying attention to the development of sports is the foundation for the rise of China's sports industry in the new era. Sports development not only includes the improvement of the ability and literacy of athletes themselves, but also includes the role of the social environment, such as the impact of the attention and love of athletes by fans of related sports events on the sports ecological environment.

The popularity of smart devices and the acceleration of network communication have greatly increased the attention paid to sports events. More people are flocking to the teams of my country's strong sports such as table tennis, badminton, and diving. The more people there are, the more distinct and rich their views and positions are, and the more obvious the likes and dislikes of the audience of sports events are. Social media allows the audience to express their enthusiasm, excitement, or loss for the event more freely and deeply by providing a platform for emotional expression.

In relevant media reports and research, some articles have revealed the diversity of sports audience behavior and its impact on the atmosphere of the event. At the same time, they also pointed out the phenomenon of "fan circle" culture infiltrating the sports field and its possible negative effects, such as cyber violence, insults and attacks, rumors and slander. These behaviors not only violate social morality, but also violate laws and regulations. This article mainly analyzes the legal nature of these

improper behaviors through case analysis, and discusses the legal disputes and countermeasures of audience behavior in combination with relevant laws and regulations such as the "Civil Code of the People's Republic of China" and the "Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China".

2. CASE ANALYSIS

2.1. Definition of Audience and Fan Circle

In the process of sports events, athletes, referees, and spectators together constitute this series of events. According to the audience's motivation or psychological characteristics for watching the game, sports audiences can be divided into supportive, recreational, interested, learning, idol, feeling, participating, venting, destructive, and herd audiences, among which the number of interested, supportive, and feeling audiences is relatively large. Interest, support, and feelings represent positive emotional feedback, and the audience mainly plays a positive role in watching sports. Here we need to introduce the concept of "fan circle", which is a general term for fan groups, and is a group of people who worship one or several people. In today's era, the fan circle centered on entertainment stars is the most discussed and concerned topic. When people talk about fan circles, the first impression is idol stars and fans. But in fact, the fan circle of star nature is not the earliest type to develop. When the interest and support attitude are getting higher and higher, it is easy to form a fan circle. Therefore, the fan circle phenomenon exists in different fields, such as books and works, two-dimensional culture, competitive sports, and even fan circles centered on historical figures. Combined with various reports and papers, the reasons for the entertainment of sports audiences are mainly due to two aspects: first, the increase in the number of people has brought instability to the original harmonious atmosphere of the group, and the differences and uniqueness of individuals have caused the complexity of sports audiences; second, the development of the sports entertainment industry has led to the enhancement of the entertainment of the events, attracting people who were originally in other fields of interest. These people are accustomed to directly expressing their emotions in the field of sports events, such as their love and dislike for different athletes.

Fan circle culture is not beneficial in all fields. The difference between star chasing and fan circle culture lies in the strength of personal control ability. Star chasing is a personal choice, with a stronger sense of autonomy, rather than following the crowd and blindly following opinions; fan circle culture not only allows people to unconsciously accept the mainstream views in the circle, but also the larger the group, the greater the impact on the outside world and athletes. In the Olympic Games, the performance of the fan circle takes personal subjectivity as the highest point and reduces objectivity and fairness to the minimum value, which does not meet the requirements of the Olympic spirit and the development of the times.

2.2. Specific Case

During the 2024 Paris Olympics, the Chinese National Table Tennis Team (Guoping) encountered an unexpected incident in the women's singles event. During the match between national table tennis players Chen Meng and Sun Yingsha, some fans made inappropriate comments on the Internet platform, insulting and abusing Chen Meng, making personal attacks, and spreading rumors and slander. In the live TV footage, some viewers also appeared to make uncivilized behavior of raising the middle finger after Chen Meng won the championship. Some netizens believe that the national table tennis team has encountered the impact of fan circle culture. In response to this problem, the Chinese National Table Tennis Team issued an official statement on August 17, saying that it will severely rectify the fan circle culture. Such behavior not only interferes with the team's training plan, but also has a negative impact on the family life of athletes, coaches and other related personnel. The national table tennis team mentioned in the statement that it will collect and retain evidence and hold relevant personnel accountable for their legal responsibilities. At the same time, the police

simultaneously launched an investigation into the incident, received reports from the masses, and successfully arrested several suspects suspected of insulting athletes and coaches.

3. THE IMPACT OF AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

The series of situations that the national table tennis team suffered in the Olympics immediately aroused widespread discussion among netizens and aroused the public's discussion on the phenomenon of fan circles in the sports world. This dual threat of online violence and offline uncivilized phenomena not only infringes on the dignity of athletes, but also undermines the fairness and objectivity of sports, and at the same time affects the overall image of the national table tennis team. According to previous video materials, unfriendly behavior towards Chen Meng has existed for a long time, so this behavior has also seriously interfered with the normal training of athletes and is not conducive to athletes maintaining a healthy psychology and competitive consciousness.

The legitimacy of the behavior of competitive sports spectators lies in "doing what should be done". That is, the audience should abide by the rules of competitive games, abide by social morality, and constrain their personal behavior within the norms of competitive sports. Generally speaking, the role of spectators in competitive sports is positive addition, and the importance of spectators to the game is not only spiritual but also material. In terms of spirit, the most prominent feature of competitive sports events is competitiveness. The cheers and shouts of the audience can strengthen the spiritual support for athletes, which can not only provide motivation for athletes to perform at a better level, but also render the warm atmosphere of the stadium. In terms of material, the purchase of tickets by the audience increases the revenue of the organizers of sports events and contributes to the construction of sports. The participation of the audience is one of the material foundations for the development of sports. If the legitimacy is violated, the disadvantages will outweigh the advantages, and the impact will be uncontrollable. For example, untimely cheering will interrupt the athlete's thinking, affect the performance and the final result, as well as the Olympic table tennis fan circle incident mentioned above.

The improper behavior of sports audiences is collective, large-scale and explosive. Some sports audiences often follow blindly, lack subjective consciousness, and are influenced and controlled by the collective spirit. The negative impact of fan circle culture on the audience is not limited to the above situation, but also reflected in the chaos of the stadium order, the struggle between different factions within the fan circle, and the formation and development of the gray industrial chain. There are different factions of fan groups within the fan circle. Due to different positions, friction and verbal battles are very likely to occur between each other, further exacerbating the opposition between fan groups and destroying the overall harmony. Behind the expansion of the fan scale, a gray industrial chain of selling personal information has emerged. Information such as flights, itineraries, and hotels of public figures has gradually been "packaged" and sold.

4. PROBLEMS

4.1. Audience Violence

The charm of competitive sports lies not only in the sense of power displayed by sports, but also in the competitive nature of racing against time. Inevitably, there will be many spectators who value scores and act irrationally because their favorite team loses. The points system deepens the audience's sense of participation and also increases the tension. It is not easy to control the emotions of the audience when watching such games. Ball sports are common events where violent incidents occur. For example, there are fans of both sides fighting in football matches, or loudly slandering the players of their own team on the field, as well as the table tennis match mentioned above. The violence on

the field, the motivation of crowd violence, the situation of the event itself, and the overall historical and cultural environment in which the audience lives all affect the behavior of the audience.

Regarding the phenomenon of online violence, the behavior of the audience is more diffuse and unlimited. Online violence refers to the behavior of a certain scale of netizens, based on their own value orientation, using the Internet platform to launch a collective, irrational, large-scale, and continuous public opinion attack on a specific target. The inappropriate remarks made by online audiences to athletes or other supporters can easily infringe upon the personal rights of the parties. Cyber violence spreads quickly, covers a wide range, and causes greater harm. It is not easy for platform regulators to deal with it in a timely manner. When public opinion spreads, the battlefield of cyber violence also expands and is not restricted by space.

4.2. Legal Related

The Civil Code of the People's Republic of China stipulates that civil subjects enjoy personality rights. Insulting and slandering others damages the reputation rights of others and constitutes civil tort liability. The provisions of the Civil Code on fighting are mainly reflected in the protection of the rights and interests of victims and compensation for damages. The infringer shall compensate for necessary expenses. The Public Security Administration Punishment Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that the act of humiliating the other party by verbal abuse shall be punished by fines or detention. Fighters are not only subject to public security management penalties, but in serious cases may violate the crime of intentional injury stipulated in the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China.

The existing laws have limited regulation on cyber violence, but they still have a certain effect. The Guiding Opinions on Punishing Cyber Violence Crimes in Accordance with the Law clearly pointed out that cyber violence crimes should be severely punished according to the Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, Civil Code and other laws. If the insults and defamation of others on the Internet platform are serious and meet the relevant provisions of the Criminal Law, they shall be convicted of insult and defamation respectively. Strengthen legislative supervision, trace the source of governance, and create a clear cyberspace.

However, there will be application problems in practice. With the continuous development of the times, the Internet penetration rate is getting higher and higher, the quality of netizens is more uneven, and the registration of information by children and teenagers is more common, and the size of the younger age group is gradually expanding. The public's weak legal awareness is the main factor that destroys the Internet environment. When watching sports events, some viewers have not yet formed a mature ideological system, lack legal awareness, and lack awareness of the seriousness and harmfulness of improper behavior. The lag of the law itself has led to the inability of existing laws and regulations to better respond to new types of network behaviors and it is difficult to cover them comprehensively. In the law enforcement stage, it is difficult to collect evidence and hold accountable for legal disputes in the online environment. Users whose rights and interests are damaged do not know how to protect their legitimate rights and interests, or are unwilling to spend energy to retain evidence and use legal means, which brings challenges to law enforcement.

4.3. Regulatory Level

Large-scale sports events have a large number of spectators, and the cultural beliefs of spectators from different countries are quite different, and their respective social norms are also different, which will also increase the possibility of on-site disputes. Insufficient supervision of event organization will lead to loopholes in the supervision of spectator behavior, which cannot effectively prevent the occurrence of legal disputes. Even event staff may cause interest disputes due to their own problems. For example, after the table tennis mixed doubles final, a staff member stepped on the table tennis racket of athlete Wang Chuqin while taking photos to record the champion partner.

5. COUNTERMEASURES TO SOLVE IMPROPER BEHAVIOR OF SPECTATORS IN SPORTS EVENTS

5.1. Conclusion

The role played by spectators in sports events has both advantages and disadvantages. When spectator behavior causes frequent legal disputes and has adverse effects on athletes, event organizations and the social environment, all parties should be held responsible in a timely manner and make suggestions for the construction of a more orderly sports industry in the future.

The proliferation of fan circle culture in the field of sports is one of the important factors that cause legal disputes. How to guide sports enthusiasts to support sports in an orderly and rational manner is not only a driving force for promoting sports development, but also a necessary requirement for maintaining a good network environment.

5.2. Countermeasures

From the perspective of sports values, sports are an expression of truth, goodness and beauty, and aggressive behavior runs counter to the value pursuit of sports. Building the moral code of sports spectators is an important measure to maintain good sports competitions. Relevant departments should vigorously carry out relevant campus theme education, cultivate young people's value concepts and improve their moral standards from an early age, reduce the impact of the Internet and fan circle culture on minors, and help them grow up healthily. Organizers of sports events should strengthen the supervision of event organization, establish and improve the supervision mechanism of audience behavior, strengthen on-site management and security work, increase training for staff and volunteers, and promptly stop violent and improper behavior to prevent legal disputes.

Law is an important tool for governing the country, and laws and regulations should be further improved. In combination with the Internet ecological environment and the new audience behavior in sports events, relevant departments should revise and improve relevant laws and regulations in a targeted manner, and clarify legal responsibilities and punishment standards. The mandatory provisions of laws and regulations can constrain the value orientation of entertainment media to the audience. Mainstream sports media should return to the essential function of sports to play a value-leading role and deeply explore the charm of sports itself. At the same time, we must strengthen law enforcement, improve the law enforcement capabilities and efficiency of law enforcement agencies, and increase the crackdown on online violence and the water army industry.

The government and other organizations also need to enhance the public's legal awareness and popularize sports knowledge. Through publicity and education, popular legal activities and other forms, we should do a good job in cultivating and guiding the audience, strengthen humanistic spirit education, give full play to the role of mass media, and implement the event etiquette publicity. And establish a diversified dispute resolution mechanism, encourage the use of non-litigation methods such as mediation and arbitration to resolve legal disputes in sports events, reduce litigation costs, and improve dispute resolution efficiency.

All parties work together to guide the audience to watch the game rationally, which will cultivate a healthier sports culture atmosphere.

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