

The  
Economist

EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION



# SPORT AND POLITICS

Child-led learning resource

# ABOUT

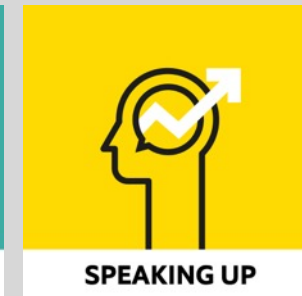
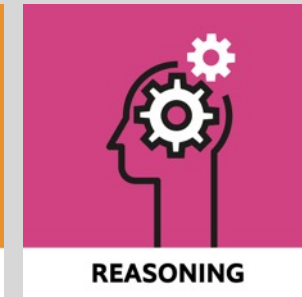
This activity helps you to think about whether sportspeople should be allowed to express their political opinions on the field.

You will be able to explore interesting questions like:

- Is sport only a game?
- When have players shared their views during matches?
- Should players keep their opinions off the field?

You can give this a go on your own, but if there's someone at home who can join you, why not work together? You could also connect with someone by telephone or video.

We'll practise some critical-thinking skills which are important for understanding and discussing the news.



**Ready? Let's go!**

# WARM UP

**It's only  
a game.**

People often say this  
about sport.

What do you think  
they mean?



OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Try to be **open-minded**. Can you think of three reasons why people think sport is "only a game".

What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with the statement?



SCEPTICISM

**1.** Can you show great **scepticism** and think of examples which disprove the statement, sport is "only a game"?

**2.** Try to think of examples of when sport was more than "only a game"...

...with your friends and family

...at school or in your local community

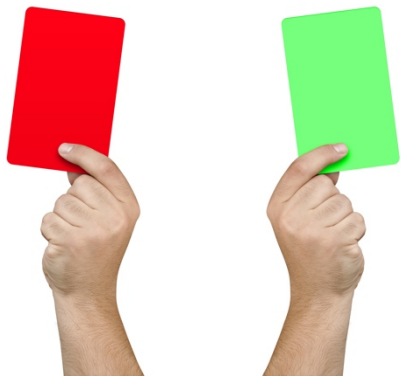
...in your country or internationally

What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with the statement?

# EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of when players have brought their personal opinions onto the pitch.

For each example, decide whether you think it should be given a red card (should not be allowed) or given a green card (is acceptable). If you think the example deserves a red card, say what you think the consequences should be.



**PEP GUARDIOLA**, the manager of Manchester City, has worn a yellow ribbon during some of his team's matches in support of Catalan independence from Spain.



**COLIN KAEPERNICK** was among some players in America's National Football League (NFL) who refused to stand for the national anthem and knelt down instead. This was in protest against racism and inequality in the country.



**JAMES MCCLEAN** is a Northern Irish footballer who plays for the Premier League team Stoke City. During November, when players wear a poppy to commemorate those who have died in conflict, he refuses to do so as he says it stands for conflicts he doesn't agree with.

# CONSEQUENCES

Here's what happened as a result.



Guardiola was fined £20,000 by FIFA for wearing the ribbon.



Some say NFL players, like Colin Kaepernick, were let go by their teams because of this. America's president, Donald Trump, called for all footballers "taking the knee" to be fired.



Every November, McClean receives mixed support and criticism and reignites a conversation about wearing poppies in sport.

Do you think these consequences were fair? Why? Why not?

What do you think? Should players be allowed to share their personal and political beliefs on the field?

*I think they **should** because...*

*I think they **shouldn't** because...*



See if you can give three reasons to support your opinion.




# ARGUMENTS

Should players be allowed to express their beliefs on the field?

Here are some arguments on either side of the debate. Read each one and decide whether it is an argument on the “yes” side (they should be allowed) or “no” side (they shouldn’t be allowed).

Go to the next page to check your answers.



**SHOULD POLITICS MIX WITH SPORT?**

If we start mixing politics and sport, it wouldn't be about people's skill any more. It would be about what their country has been doing.

**Example:**  
**Apartheid and sporting boycott**



**SHOULD POLITICS MIX WITH SPORT?**

People watch sports to enjoy themselves.  
They shouldn't have to think about politics when they're trying to relax.

**Example:**  
**Rule 51 of the Olympic Charter**



**SHOULD POLITICS MIX WITH SPORT?**

Athletes are also citizens. The issues that affect people around the world, like racism and sexism, affect athletes too. They have a right to freedom of speech and to fight for the causes they believe in.

**Example:**  
**Colin Kaepernick “take the knee” in the NFL**



**SHOULD POLITICS MIX WITH SPORT?**

If you make a political statement during sporting events, a huge number of people are going to see it and may take notice. Over 3 billion people are said to have watched some part of the 2018 FIFA World Cup

**Example:**  
**Indigenous protests and the Commonwealth Games 2018**

# RESEARCH

## Your challenge:

Do some research! For each argument, research the example.

Find out:

- What happened
- When, where and who was involved
- What the outcome or consequence was

## YES



**SHOULD POLITICS MIX WITH SPORT?**

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**Example:**  
Indigenous protests and the Commonwealth Games 2018

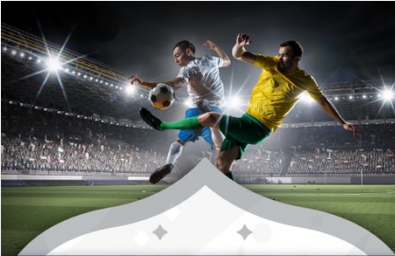


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## NO



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## COOL DOWN

- Were any of the examples shocking or surprising?
- Do you think the right thing was done in each example?
- Was the outcome of each example fair?

Watch out for the second part of this activity which will develop these questions further. You can complete it from next week onwards.





# SUPER-REFLECTION

- Sporting events have a big audience. Is this a reason for or against players sharing their opinions on the field?
- Have any of the examples changed your opinion? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Players are role models. Does this matter?

## NOW...



### **Do some research**

Find out about a different example of when a player expressed political or religious beliefs on the field



### **Have a discussion**

Talk to someone else about the issues covered in these activities



### **Become the teacher!**

See if you can go through these activities again, as the teacher, with somebody else in your household