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Anarchism & sports

Gabriel Kuhn

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Anarchism and sports. Isn't that a contradiction? Isn't sports characterised by competition, commercialism, conservative body norms, nationalist frenzy? Isn't it an opiate of the masses? Yes. But sports is also characterized by community, inclusivity, social learning, empowerment, and last but not least fun. The anarcho-syndacalst writer Albert Camus, in his youth a talented football goalkeeper, famously stated: "all I know most surely about morality and obligations I owe to football." We can assume that Camus exaggerated, but the statement reveals the power of sports. It is up to us to bring the best out of it & to dump the worst. Anarchists have done so throughout history. They have founded sport and social clubs, they were involved in the workers' sport movement, they formed their own teams, organized their own tournaments, trained in their own gyms.

The two most important reasons to engage with sports as anarchists are:

1. Sports won't go anywhere. Millions of people love sports. They'll want to play and watch sports even in a liberated society. So as much as we need liberated forms of political decision-

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making, economic production and artistic expression we need liberated forms of sports.

2. Sports are an important terrain of political struggle. With millions of people closely tuned in to sports in one way or another, even the most innocent gestures can take on big significance. To forego this arena of social debate and conflict would be a grave mistake. Even if you don't like sports you must not underestimate its political significance.