



Modern Sports: Sponsorship, Betting, and Fiqh Ethics

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Abstract

Modern sports have transformed into a global industry involving massive capital turnover through sponsorship and broadcasting rights. However, this evolution has also raised ethical challenges concerning betting practices (*maysir*). This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of modern sports through the lens of *Fiqh* ethics, focusing on the legitimacy of sponsorship contracts, the legal status of betting, and the implementation of muamalah principles in maintaining the integrity of sports. The methodology employed is qualitative research with a library research approach, referencing the resolutions of the *Majma' al-Fiqh al-Islami* and the fatwas of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). The findings indicate that sponsorship is permissible as long as the promoted object does not contradict *Sharia* (i.e., not involving alcohol, gambling, or usury). Meanwhile, sports betting is categorized as strictly forbidden (*haram*) gambling because it contains elements of speculation (*gharar*) and the risk of material loss for participants. This article also formulates the parameters distinguishing between betting and prize-based competitions (*ju'alah*), where prizes must originate from a third party and be based on physical skill rather than luck. In conclusion, the application of *Fiqh* ethics in modern sports is crucial to ensuring that the industry's financial progress remains aligned with the objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, namely preserving the moral and spiritual welfare of the community.

Keywords: *Modern Sports, Sponsorship, Betting, Fiqh Ethics, Maysir, Muamalah.*

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Introduction

Modern sports have undergone a profound paradigm shift, transforming from mere physical activities and localized competitions into a global industry worth trillions of dollars (Deloitte, 2024). This evolution involves a convergence of commercial, social, and cultural dimensions, where sports are no longer just an arena for sportsmanship but a complex business ecosystem sustained by massive sponsorship deals, exclusive broadcasting rights, and extensively organized betting systems. However, this rapid commercialization brings significant ethical and legal challenges, particularly when intersecting with *Sharia* principles. In current industrial practices, a misalignment is frequently found between funding sources and Islamic values, where many clubs and sporting events form partnerships with alcohol, tobacco, and online betting platforms as entities that fundamentally contradict the principles of *muamalah* (Beekun, 2006).

The phenomenon of legalizing betting in popular sports such as football, boxing, and horse racing increasingly blurs the boundary between competitive entertainment and the practice of gambling (*maysir*), which is strictly prohibited in Islam. This creates an urgent need to re-examine the dynamics of modern sports through the lens of *Fiqh* ethics, an Islamic legal study that considers aspects of *halal-haram* (permissibility), *maslahah* (public interest), and the prevention of harm (*sad ad-dzari'ah*). The prohibition of betting in modern sports aligns with the principles of *maysir* emphasized in Islamic law. As explained by Wahbah az-Zuhaili (2011) in *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu*, any form of wagering based on speculation and involvingsg the unfair transfer of wealth is strictly forbidden. This firmness is crucial amidst the proliferation of partnerships between sports clubs and online betting platforms, which represents an abandonment of corporate moral responsibility toward the broader social ecosystem (Beekun, 2006).

In this regard, Taqiuddin An-Nabhani (2004) in *An-Nizham al-Iqtishadi fil Islam* asserts that every form of wealth development (*tanmiyatul mal*) must be bound by *shara'* laws regarding the causes of ownership and the types of permitted transactions. In his perspective on Islamic economics, the legal status of a contract (*aqd*) depends heavily on its object; if the activity or object being promoted is *haram*, then the compensation or profit derived from it is also *haram*. Az-Zuhaili (2011) further strengthens this argument by stating that any contract containing elements of pure speculation, where one party's gain is derived from another's loss, is void (*batil*).

This study is highly relevant in providing moral guidance for Muslim industry stakeholders including athletes, organizers, and spectators that they can participate in the sports ecosystem without compromising their spiritual integrity and religious values. The social and moral responsibility of a business entity in Islam cannot be separated from spiritual integrity; thus, the selection of sponsors is not merely a matter of profitability but also of theological consequence. Based on these complexities, this article intends to analyze in depth the *Islamic Fiqh* perspective on various sponsorship models in the sports industry and clarify the legal standing of betting, which is often disguised as competition. Furthermore, this research will examine how the formulation of *Fiqh* ethical principles can be implemented as an instrument to safeguard moral and spiritual integrity in contemporary sports practices. Through this approach, clear parameters will be established to distinguish between legitimate economic transactions and practices that violate *Sharia*, providing a theoretical contribution to the development of *Fiqh Muamalah* in the field of sports.



Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research design. The approach utilized is normative-theological and juridical-empirical, where modern sports industry phenomena are analyzed through the instruments of Islamic law (*Fiqh Muamalah*).

The data sources for this research consist of:

- Primary Data: Authoritative texts such as *An-Nizham al-Iqtishadi fil Islam* by Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu* by Wahbah az-Zuhaili, as well as the collected resolutions of the *Majma' al-Fiqh al-Islami* (OIC) and the *fatwas* of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).
- Secondary Data: Sports industry reports (such as the Deloitte Football Money League), academic journal articles related to Islamic marketing, and literature regarding contemporary business ethics.

Data collection was conducted through documentation studies, involving the collection, classification, and interpretation of relevant legal texts and industry data. Data analysis utilizes descriptive-analytical and deductive methods, moving from general principles of Islamic law such as the prohibition of *maysir* and *gharar* to draw specific conclusions regarding the legality of sponsorship and betting practices in modern sports. This comprehensive analysis serves to formulate an ethical framework aligned with the objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

Result and Discussion

Islamic Fiqh Perspective on Various Forms of Sponsorship in Modern Sports

In the modern sports ecosystem, sponsorship is not merely a business transaction but a strategic financial partnership where the sponsor provides funding, goods, or services in exchange for promotional rights, logo usage, and other

exclusive access. From an *Islamic Fiqh* perspective, this phenomenon cannot be viewed monolithically; it must be deconstructed through several muamalah legal instruments involving the contract (*aqd*), the permissibility of the object (*ma'qud 'alaih*), and the moral impact (*maqasid*).

Substantively, sports sponsorship can be categorized into three primary contractual schemes: ***Ijarah (Leasing of Services)***: In this context, the club or athlete leases "advertising space" (such as jerseys, stadium perimeter boards, or social media content) to the sponsor. The sponsor pays compensation (*ujrah*) for the benefit of brand exposure provided. ***Ju'alah (Reward/Commission)***: Sponsorship is often performative, where financial bonuses are granted only if the athlete or team achieves a specific milestone (e.g., winning a league). This is permissible as long as the performance parameters are measurable and free from prohibited speculation. ***Mudharabah or Musharakah (Profit-Sharing)***: In some cases, sponsorship may take the form of a business partnership involving the sharing of profits and risks, provided both the sponsor and the organizer agree upon such terms.

The fundamental principle of muamalah states that "The original legal status of transactions is permissibility (*mubah*), unless there is evidence (*dalil*) prohibiting it." However, the permissibility of sponsorship is void if the product or service being promoted contradicts *Sharia*. Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, in *An-Nizham al-Iqtishadi fil Islam*, emphasizes that any compensation received from activities promoting vice (*ma'siyat*) is *haram*.

For instance, sponsorships from online betting platforms, alcohol producers, or *ribawi* (usury-based) banks reach a critical ethical juncture. Although these contracts may be administratively professional, they are theologically considered defective (*fasad*) because they involve the element of *Ta'awun 'ala al-itsm* (cooperation in sin). Promoting gambling symbols on the jerseys of Muslim athletes, for example, not only violates



legal rulings but also *harms* the athlete's *murū'ah* (dignity and honor).

Islamic Fiqh also considers the aspect of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the objectives of Sharia) in evaluating sponsorship. The inherent goal of sports is to maintain physical health (*hifz an-nafs*). If sponsorship originates from products that systemically damage health such as the tobacco industry or products that trigger addiction, contemporary scholars tend to prohibit (*haram*) or at the very least discourage (*makruh*) such cooperation based on the principle of *Sadd ad-Dzari'ah* (blocking the means to harm).

Furthermore, sponsorship must guarantee justice for all parties. The exploitation of athletes through highly restrictive sponsorship contracts that obstruct religious obligations (such as daily prayers or Ramadan fasting) is considered contrary to the Islamic principle of justice. Therefore, *Fiqh* ethics demand transparency (*tabayyun*) and a balance of rights and obligations in every sponsorship draft to ensure that the financial progress of the sports industry does not sacrifice the moral and spiritual integrity of the *ummah*.

Integration of Sponsorship and Sports Ethics in Islam

Sponsorship in the modern sports ecosystem is not merely a funding instrument but a form of strategic financial cooperation where sponsors provide financial support or services in exchange for promotional rights and extensive brand exposure. From an *Islamic Fiqh* perspective, this phenomenon is analyzed as a form of *muamalah* contract, generally referring to the schemes of *ijarah* (leasing of advertising space) or *ju'alah* (provision of rewards for specific achievements). The validity of such sponsorship contracts depends heavily on the permissibility (*halal* status) of the products or services being promoted. As asserted by Taqiuddin An-Nabhani in *An-Nizham al-Iqtishadi fil Islam*, every form of

wealth development must be bound by *Sharia* law regarding the causes of ownership. Consequently, sponsorships sourced from the gambling industry, alcoholic beverages, or usurious (*ribawi*) practices are considered void under *Sharia*, as they involve elements of *ta'awun 'ala al-itsm* (cooperating in sinful acts), even if the contracts meet industry standards of professionalism administratively.

Furthermore, the integration of sponsorship and sports ethics in Islam encompasses a moral responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) that transcends material gain. *Fiqh* ethics emphasize that athletes and sports organizations serve as representatives of values, where the selection of sponsors must reflect spiritual integrity and uphold *murū'ah* (personal dignity). This aligns with the thoughts of Rafik Issa Beekun in *Islamic Business Ethics*, stating that social responsibility in Islam is inseparable from the corridor of *Tawhid* (monotheism). In this context, sports ethics demand total transparency in contracts to avoid elements of deception (*ghish*) or uncertainty (*gharar*) that could disadvantage any party. Sponsors are not permitted to impose clauses that excessively exploit athletes or obstruct religious obligations, as the primary objective of sports in Islam is physical and mental welfare (*hifz an-nafs*), rather than the mere commodification of humans for market interests.

Finally, *Fiqh* ethics in modern sports act as a bulwark against corrupt practices such as bribery (*risywah*) and match-fixing, which are often triggered by the pressure of sponsors or betting syndicates. Sports must consistently maintain the principles of justice (*'adalah*) and honesty (*sidq*) to ensure that competition remains a pure demonstration of physical capability and strategy. The implementation of these ethics ensures that the financial progress brought by sponsorship does not sacrifice the values of integrity and sportsmanship that constitute the essence of sports itself. Thus, the synchronization between sports business regulations and *Fiqh* boundaries



is expected to create an industrial climate that is healthy and competitive, while remaining within the framework of Allah SWT's pleasure (*rida*) and the broader welfare of humanity.

Example:

Table 1. Ethical Framework of Modern Sports in Islamic Jurisprudence

Criteria	Sharia Ethics	Prohibited Practices (Avoided)
Source of Funding	Halal (Lawful) & Thayyib (Pure/Wholesome)	Gambling, Alcohol, Riba (Usury), Harmful Products
Objectives	Performance/Achievement & Health (<i>Hifz an-Nafs</i>)	Exploitation & Excessive Materialism
Social Impact	Strengthening <i>Ukhuwah</i> (Brotherhood/Social Cohesion)	Triggering Gambling & Hostility
Integrity	Honesty (<i>Sidq</i>) & Trustworthiness (<i>Amanah</i>)	Match-fixing & Deception

The Legal Status of Sports Betting in Fiqh and Distinguishing It from Prize-Based Competitions

The legal status of betting in modern sports is strictly defined within the perspective of Islamic *Fiqh*, where such activities are categorized as *Maysir* (gambling), which is absolutely prohibited. As explained by Wahbah az-Zuhaili in *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu*, the essence of gambling is any game containing an element of material wagering (*rahn*), where the winner takes the rights of the loser based on speculation and uncertainty (*gharar*). In the modern sports ecosystem, betting is frequently disguised through score prediction schemes or online betting exchanges involving the void (*batil*) transfer of wealth.

Theologically, this practice undermines social structures and human mentality as it encourages the acquisition of wealth without productive effort (*kasb*), which contradicts the principles of Islamic economic justice. Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, in *An-Nizham al-Iqtishadi fil Islam*, further emphasizes that wealth obtained through pure speculation does not meet the requirements as a legitimate cause of ownership (*sebab al-tamalluk*) under *Sharia*.

To maintain the integrity of *muamalah*, it is crucial for sports stakeholders to understand the parameters distinguishing prohibited betting from permissible prize-based competitions. The fundamental difference lies in the source of the prize funds and the risk of loss for the participants. In a prize-based competition that is legally valid in *Fiqh* (often referred to as *Ju'alah* or *Sabaq* contracts), the prize must originate from a third party (sponsor/government) or from only one of the competing parties (the organizer) without collecting registration fees that are then converted into the main prize pool.

Conversely, if the prize is sourced from the registration fees of all participants (joint contribution), where every participant faces the risk of losing their money if they lose and the opportunity to multiply it if they win, the scheme falls into the category of *maysir*.

Beyond the source of funding, competitions permitted in Islam must possess utilitarian value and be skill-based, rather than relying solely on chance-based outcomes. *Fiqh* provides flexibility for competitions that support physical prowess and readiness, such as horse riding, archery, or other athletic sports, provided they adhere to *Sharia* boundaries.

By applying the principle of transparency (*tabayyun*) in every competition structure, Muslims can participate in sporting events without falling into the trap of disguised gambling. A clear understanding of these distinctions serves as a moral protection instrument, ensuring that



the competitive spirit remains on the path of sportsmanship and achievement (performance-based), rather than material exploitation that erodes religious values.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis: Prize-Based Competition vs. Sports Betting

Comparative Aspect	Prize-Based Competition (Permissible/Mubah)	Betting/Gambling (Prohibited/Haram)
Participation Requirement	Participants are not required to pay for the prize; entry fees are strictly for reasonable operational costs (not as a stake).	Participants must stake money/material as a risk; if they lose, the money is gone (zero-sum game).
Source of Prize	Provided by a third party, sponsor, or the organizer (not derived from participant fees).	Derived from the stakes/fees of other participants or from a betting "bank."
Winner Determination	Clear criteria based on ability, physical prowess, effort, and achievement (skill-based).	Dominated by luck, chance, or match outcomes beyond the participants' control (chance-based).
Contractual Element	Utilizes Ju'alah (reward promise) or Sabaq (competition) contracts with full transparency.	Contains elements of Gharar (uncertainty) and Maysir (pure speculation).
Social Impact	Encourages achievement, health, sportsmanship, and a positive spirit of cooperation.	Leads to addiction, financial loss, social conflict, and moral degradation.
Legal Status	Mubah/Halal (as long as other Sharia boundaries are respected).	Haram Mutlak (categorized as a major sin in Islam).

Implementation of *Fiqh* Ethical Principles in Modern Sports Practices

The application of *Fiqh* ethics in modern sports is a manifestation of integrating *Sharia* values into a highly dynamic industry. Based on the resolutions and recommendations of the *Majma' al-Fiqh al-Islami* under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), there are five primary pillars that form the foundation of sports ethics:

- 1. Prohibition of *Maysir* (Gambling) and *Gharar* (Uncertainty):** This principle asserts that no sporting transaction or activity may serve as a vehicle for wagering or risk-based chance. This implies a mandatory requirement for transparency in determining prizes and ensuring funding sources are free from speculative elements.
- 2. Justice and Transparency in Contracts:** All rights and obligations of the involved parties including athletes, clubs, and sponsors must be explicitly stated in written contracts to prevent future disputes.
- 3. Adherence to *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*:** This emphasizes prioritizing public interest (*maslahah*) and minimizing harm (*mafsadah*). In this context, sports are viewed as a means to enhance physical health, achievement, and morality, rather than merely pursuing material gain that could lead to addiction or social conflict.
- 4. Moral and Ethical Conduct in Competition:** This pillar emphasizes sportsmanship, honesty, and fair play. It strictly prohibits all forms of cheating, the use of performance-enhancing drugs (doping), and match-fixing for economic interests.
- 5. Moderation and Honor:** This principle functions to prevent sports from descending into excessive consumerist culture, ensuring respect for religious obligations and avoiding the promotion of lifestyles that contradict Islamic values.



In practice, the implementation of these principles in modern sports operations can be realized through selective and ethical business partnerships. Clubs or sports organizations are obligated to screen sponsors to ensure they do not originate from the gambling, alcohol, tobacco, or other prohibited industries, thereby maintaining the sanctity of the sport's objectives. Furthermore, the determination of competition prizes must be transparent from the outset, sourced from the organizer or third-party sponsors, with judging mechanisms based purely on the effort and skill of the athlete rather than lotteries or speculation. By keeping competitions clean from organized betting activities, modern sports can reclaim their function as a medium for character education that upholds adab (etiquette), health, and human brotherhood in accordance with the grand vision of Islamic law.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis presented, it can be concluded that modern sports, from an Islamic perspective, are not merely physical activities but a muamalah space that must adhere to *Sharia* principles.

First, sponsorship in sports is permissible (*mubah*) as long as it meets the criteria for the legitimacy of the contract's object and does not involve *ta'awun 'ala al-itsm* (cooperation in sin). The use of funds from the gambling, alcohol, or tobacco industries automatically invalidates the contract's legitimacy, as it contradicts the principle of the sanctity of wealth sources in Islam.

Second, sports betting is strictly defined as a form of *maysir* (gambling) and is absolutely prohibited (*haram mutlak*) due to its high level of speculation (*gharar*) and its nature as a zero-sum game, where one's gain is derived from another's loss. The fundamental distinction between betting and legitimate prize-based competitions lies in the source of funding; valid competitions must be

funded by a third party or the organizer as a form of achievement appreciation, rather than from the accumulation of participants' registration fees.

Third, the implementation of *Fiqh* ethics, derived from the resolutions of the *Majma' al-Fiqh al-Islami* and the fatwas of the MUI, provides comprehensive guidance for maintaining sports integrity. Principles such as contractual justice, prize transparency, sportsmanship without doping, and moderation in competition are essential instruments to ensure that sports remain within the framework of *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*. Thus, *Fiqh* ethics function as a moral filter, ensuring that the financial advancement of the sports industry does not sacrifice spiritual values and human dignity.

Based on the findings and analysis of this study, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for stakeholders in the modern sports industry:

For Muslim Professional Athletes and Club Managers, it is essential to enhance literacy regarding *Fiqh Muamalah*, specifically in conducting independent *Sharia* audits of potential sponsorship partners' business profiles. This is necessary to ensure that financial collaborations not only provide material profit but also safeguard the *murū'ah* (honor) and spiritual integrity from affiliations with prohibited industries.

For Competition Organizers, it is expected that organizers formulate more transparent tournament structures, particularly in separating operational registration fees from the source of the winners' prizes. This ensures that no elements of disguised gambling (*maysir*) disadvantage the participants.

For Religious Authorities and Academics, their role is crucial in conducting more extensive public education regarding sports ethics (*fiqh al-riyadhah*), given the increasingly aggressive infiltration of the online gambling industry through digital platforms.



For Governments and Broadcasting Regulators, there is a need to tighten supervision over betting advertisements and *shubhat* (doubtful) products in sports broadcasts to protect the public, especially the younger generation, from the impacts of gambling addiction and moral degradation. Through the synergy between formal regulation and *Fiqh* ethical boundaries, the sports industry can continue to evolve as a vehicle for physical and social welfare, free from exploitative practices, while remaining relevant to modern demands without sacrificing Sharia principles.

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Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

SEH and NAH conceived and designed the research. SPS performed the literature review and drafted the initial manuscript. AB and PMH analyzed the *Fiqh* perspectives and provided critical revisions based on the *Majma' al-Fiqh* resolutions. All authors contributed to the final data synthesis and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

AI Disclosure Statement

The author used AI tools during the preparation of this work for drafting the initial structure, refining the linguistic flow, and organizing bibliographic references. After using the service, the author

thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication. The authors declare that the core research, ideological analysis, and final synthesis were critically conducted by the authors to ensure academic integrity.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors confirm the absence of any potential conflicts of interest such as financial, institutional, or personal that could influence the conduct of this study, the analysis of data, the preparation of the manuscript, or its publication. This research was conducted independently, and the conclusions reached are solely based on the academic analysis of the authors without any external influence from the sponsors or institutions mentioned in the study.

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