



Body and Sport in Greek Antiquity and Today

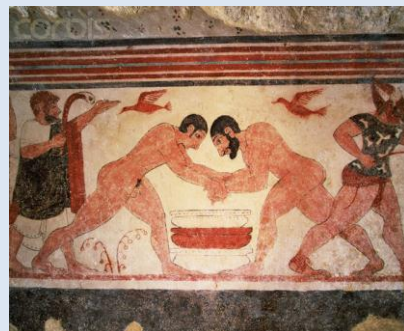
Craig Eckert and Angela Glaros
Department of Sociology/Anthropology

Status of sport in ancient Greece

- A “ritual sacrifice of human energy”

(Sansone 1988:75)

- Sacrificial vessels were most common form of prize
 - origin of the Stanley cup?



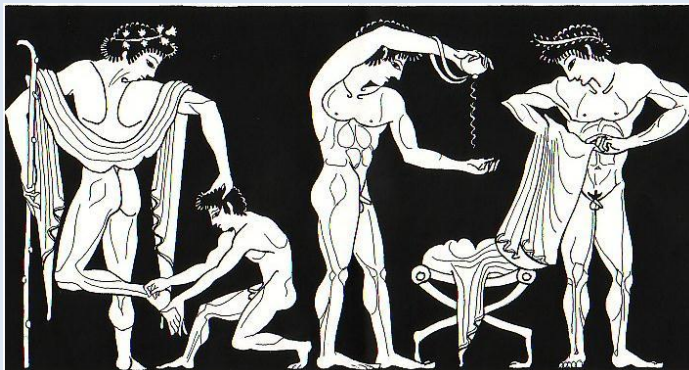
Status of the athlete

- Embodiment of virtue (αρετή)
 - moral worth
 - physical beauty and strength
- Sacrificial victim *and* sacrificer.
 - Winner is worthy of dedication to the god
- Bodily signs of ritual status
 - Nudity
 - Anointing with olive oil
 - Decoration with crowns and woolen bands (fillets)



Nudity

- Greek word for naked or lightly clad (γυμνός) gives us “gymnasium”
- May be connected to initiation rituals



Anointing with olive oil

- Athletes applied olive oil before competition and removed it with a strigil afterward
- Greeks also anointed statues of gods



Woolen fillets

- Sacrificial animals decorated with red woolen fillets prior to sacrifice



Crowns of laurel or olive

- Crowns of vegetation (olive, laurel) and woolen bands (fillets)
- Priests and priestesses wore crowns

