



## THE EXHAUSTION OF A CHAMPION: FROM WHERE DOES SÜREYYA RUN?

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### **Abstract:**

To be a champion is the purpose of every athlete. Becoming national champion, followed by obtaining the title of European Champion and then victory in the Olympiad make up a sequence which all athletes try to complete. An athlete should win many competitions in order to be renowned. Süreyye Ayhan, recently the most frequently spelled name in Turkish athleticism, also paved the same way in her first years. She became successful in running mid-range distances. Starting a race by an early attack, she seemed insurmountable. As she scored more and more successes, her ambition for still more and her fear of loss brought her to the point of unsportsmanlike behavior. It is not infrequent that a sportswoman/sportsman succumbs to fame, to individual and public benefits and resorts to unethical ways. To go on scientifically and also ethically seem to become unbearable for such individuals. While the world sport system intensively struggles against taking doping material, disobeying rules become a repugnancy and finally, guilt. Subjects such as legality, responsibility, self-control, increasing knowledge ought to be continually and positively valued and revalued. Mature relationships among competitors as well as organizers should take place by observance of rules. These are the general themes of this paper.

**Keywords:** Sureyya, champion, sport, doping, exhaustion

### **1. Introduction**

In Turkey, in the historical process, the government authorities' failure to penetrate the social sphere has been also seen in the field of sports. The sporting field could not have been developed as an institution and could not be a part of everyday life. The reason for this is the admissibility relation that the government administration could not establish between the social field and the government administration as much as the influence of

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the Islamic cultural sub-structure. In addition, there is also the effect that a government administration understanding based on scientific knowledge that could not be managed institutionalized. Another observation is that the participation of women in sports activities throughout the history of sport is much more difficult and less (Yarar, 2014).

It is proved that Süreyya Ayhan disregarded these qualities but it is wrong to declare that she is the only responsible person. She has fallen in the net of intricate, but not always honest relationships. In addition, she was not properly taken care of by authorities. Without the assistance of a proper physician, psychologist and scientifically-minded trainer, she was easily led astray. The reasons of her fall should be analyzed honestly and in every detail. Unless this is done, the results of her misuse of fame cannot be evaluated by the more youthful athletes who aspire for success. In the case of Ayhan the relevant institutions of the state are not all together irresponsible. And transferring athletes from other countries is not a resolution for the lack of proper infra-structure.

Süreyya Ayhan was recognized as a new face in the field of athletics in Turkey by racing in the semi-finals of the Sydney Olympiad in 2000. *“In The Athletics World Championship in 2001 she achieved a ‘first’ by running in the 1500m in finals. In 2002, she became champion in the same category. During 2002 and 2003, she was recognized as the best woman athlete of this distance”* (7). In 2002, she was chosen as the most successful woman athlete of Europe. She surprised all authorities by a swift start like a rabbit athlete, by securing a gap of many meters from others and finishing first without decrease of tempo.

With her title of European Champion and by her constantly improving degree, she was the favorite of the press and of the authorities for the World Athletics Championship to be organized in Paris in 2003. However, for Ayhan the first great disappointment came on August 31 2003 in the St. Denis Stadium. She could not tolerate the attack of the Russian athlete Tatiana Tomasova and had to be content with the silver medal. Failing to obtain world championship, which was so close for the first time, Süreyya Ayhan and especially her trainer Yücel Kop were severely criticized. When the couple declared during the press conference that the event coincided with her menstruation period, arguments for and against multiplied and the event had been talked over for many days. However, the sports on newspaper pages and screens cannot be directly dictated by the argument of capitalist commercialization and professionalism (Rowe, 1996).

## 2. Material and Method

This research was carried out by using internet and written news in the descriptive scanning model. In this context, content analysis is a method based on quantifying printed and visual texts and documents according to predetermined categories and interpreting them using quantitative research strategies.

In this study, a screening model was used to describe the facts as they existed. The scanned data were analyzed by content analysis method.

In the objectives of the research, the newspapers included in the study sample were carefully scanned by the researcher and the news on the pages included the words "champion Sureyya". Content analysis was done on the determined news.

### 3. Results

One of Turkey's greatest hopes for the gold medal in the Olympiad in Athens was Ayhan. For a country which had so far won only one bronze medal, a woman athlete, being one of the most successful on the field, was quite important. But, a short time before going to the games, it was declared that Ayhan had been injured during exercises in Germany and that she was unable to participate. And a while later it was reported that she prevented the medics from applying doping tests to her. Although she proved to be clear after the tests, she was punished by the International Athletics Federation for her behavior. *"Yücel Kop, who was also accused, declared that Ayhan had not certainly not taken doping material, but that a male person responsible to the International Anti-Doping Institution had tried to enter her room for the urine test and that she thereupon prevented the act"* (9). Authorities of athletics had singled out Ayhan as the most able woman athlete in Turkey when she had become second only to the world champion. She was an idol for the sportswomen in the country. In each of her competitions for the middle distance run (800-1500m) she was telling the world that she too is in. With serious contributions, Vestel (a trade firm) sponsored her campings in the United States. Although these camping, sponsorships and state contributions were made when her performance was at top level, they were nevertheless important. When you are an amateur exercising in dust or mud, with inappropriate shoes and clothing, no one cares how you are fed and where you are running to get the score. But now you are European champ; yesterday was not important, tomorrow is. To increase number of "Süreyyas" and to compete against worldwide etc. can be put before us as tasks. It was difficult to climb to the summit, but it was more difficult to stand there. There are unethical ways of turning what is hard to what is easy. You would be a hero until you were caught up. Sport fields are full of such dramatic heroes. Many athletes racing all over the world, ranging, say, from Ben Johnson to Marion Jones, and in our country to Süreyya were attracted by the magic of success and were unable to prevent their ambitions running ahead of their reason. When Süreyya chose the unethical way, she received a punishment of two years dismissal. The period was over, she was expected to return, but it was found that both control samples contained doping material. For Süreyya this was the beginning of the end. Turkish main news media was continually interested in her private life in magazine dimensions. But is there a trainer who would direct her by following scientific developments? Does she have a sport psychologist closely observing her states in competitions and exercises? Does she have diet expert to regulate her food according to the season of competition and exercise? Is there a tactician and a manager who decide whether she should compete in a particular event? Does anybody give her reports about the recent conditions and degrees of her major competitors? Does she have a physician who knows and controls which pills against

fever or even headache are among prohibited medicaments? Is there a health center which closely cares for her condition? As a team how many times in a month do you come together and evaluate recent developments? It is possible to multiply such questions but the real question is who are responsible from this result and to what extent? Who will share the responsibility of neglecting the protection of a European champion, once in the 85 years of the Republic, in so difficult a branch like athletics? Who will give an account for irrational competition which resulted with sacrificing her at the altar of mean interests? Obviously one can question the sufficiency of science in solving human contradictions. One can also be critical of scientific arguments construed on hypotheses concerning the differences between body and mind or the concept of being human akin to the machine. Moreover, one can also put to test the supposed intellectual higher values related to traditionally accepted norms. Then you are at liberty to question the excuse -the coincidence of the menstruation period with the competition day- for the failure to become world champion. The traditionally accepted roles of sport scientists are not exempt from interrogation. *"This may lead to an overall inquiry of the values of modern society. It is better to think over remedies rather than letting the anomalies to take care of themselves"* (8). Finally, one can also wish to learn the financial situations of other athletes in the national team and the cost of sponsorship provided by the Vestel firm.

The attraction of the idea of making money has differentiated the sporting experience from the playing experience (Bale, 1994). And also from 1970s to 1980s are clearly interpreted as the role of sport as an intermediary in power potential and power relationship, as the sport is clearly the stage for extra politicization and commercialization (Hargereaves, 1994). However, in the history, every four years repeated, those who succeeded in games known as sacred crown games, wreaths, olive branches, bay branches were rewarded with a basket of apples and the athletes participating in the games swore that they were willing to comply with the rules (Poliakoff, 1987). High ranking values such as ability, knowledge and reasonable pleasure need to be revalued on the ground of promoting a better life. Scientific endeavor necessitates such revaluations together with the improvement of methods and the establishment of new traditions. Alongside theoretical innovations, practical issues need to be resolved. Recently, the situation of two Ethiopian women athletes became such an issue. The GSGM (General Directory for Youth and Sport) dared to pay 1 million dollars for their transference, disregarding its own values. The issue to be questioned is: *"GSGM, upon the directive of Mehmet Atalay, "I want an athlete who shall win a medal in The Olympiad"*, secured a budget of 1 million dollars and thereupon the Federation of Athleticism came to terms with two Ethiopian athletes, one male and one female (10). In the case of Süreyya, the Athletics Federation and the GSGM disciplinary board could get rid of entering the doping process with the next athlete if correct steps could be taken.

Elvan Abeylegesse, Turkey and European record holder, an Olympic silver medal winner athlete. The International Athletics Federations Association announced that the doping test was positive. In the IAAF statement, Elvan Abeylegesse took back

the 5,000 meter and 10 thousand meter silver medal he won in Beijing in 2008 with a 10,000 meter silver medal at the 2007 World Championships.

Binnaz Uslu became a bronze medalist in the Mediterranean Games in Spain in 2005. Binnaz Uslu explained that he had left the sport when it appeared that he was doping. .

Nevin Yanıt, became the 2012 European champion, Olympic fifth, 2013 European Indoor Athletics Championship. Nevin Answer, all records were deleted due to doping. Aslı Çakır Alptekin, won 1500 gold medals at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Aslı Çakır Alptekin has been withdrawn for doping and has been withdrawn from all competitions for 8 years.

#### 4. Discussion and Results

In conclusion, when a champion is led, by unskillful hands, to run on the wrong track, the system does not close its eyes to the fact. When she, as a woman athlete, had become European champion and the world's second best, she also became the idol of young girls living at the suburbs. Now her outlook on life is full of vagueness; she is an old sportswoman who is of no use even to herself. She is an exhausted champion who no longer knows from where she had run.

Well, who is guilty? Do the state and its relevant institutions had no guilt before, during and after the affair. Constitution of the Turkish Republic, Article 59: *"The state takes precautions to promote the health of the body and soul of Turkish citizens of every age, and supports the spreading of sport to masses. The state protects the successful sportsman/sportswoman."* (11).

The basic characteristics of being a sports fellow is knowing oneself, regulating oneself and transcending gone self.

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