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16th May, 2017

F.A.O. André F. Gueisbuhler,
Secretary General
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique

In response to your reply to Mr. Eugene Minogue on the 20th April regarding the issue of the encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning by Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG); I would like to provide some clarification, as well as share my thoughts and views with you on some of the historical context and lineage that you present.

For the sake of simplicity, when I refer to Parkour, I am using this as the collective term for Parkour, Freerunning and L'Art du Déplacement.

While FIG expresses an interest in obstacles and apparatus for competition, you are incorrect in surmising that such definitions would not fall under the definitions of Parkour as expressed by many including the founders and early practitioners, as well as current organisations. Parkour is very clearly a practice that involves problem solving around obstacles (both built and natural), not only physically, but importantly mentally in a variety of terrains. The issue of competition is a separate one, and, as you yourself state that the founder of gymnastics supported an anti-competition stance although FIG has included competition within the sport of gymnastics.

Most people have been introduced to Parkour by various media depictions of the discipline that have almost entirely represented the practice within the urban terrain and at its most spectacular. Examples of this include movements at height when jumping from one urban structure to another, traversing at height, balance skills displayed by moving on small structures such as railings, including moving at speed and then linking all of these variables together.

Parkour is a recognised culture and sport in its own distinct and unique right and is not merely or simply a “non-competitive training methodology”, as referred to in the FIG press release.

Regarding the lineage, the word Parkour came about from a discussion between David Belle and Hubert Koundé as detailed in my book 'Breaking the Jump', to give David Belle a sense of individualism and opportunities that would separate him from his friends (the other founders), Yann Hnuatra, Chau Belle, Malik Diouf, Charles Perrière, Sébastien Foucan, Guylain N'guba Boyeke, Laurent Piemontese and Williams Belle; and what they had all collectively created. The word *parcours* was not used in any way distinctly by the early practitioners any more than others involved in various athletic practices in France, that the word was appropriate for and in connection with any 'route' or course.

To claim that the sport of gymnastics was the sole discipline to support physical endeavours with a sense of altruism is both opportunistic and uninformed. Parkour has its own very distinct and unique culture. Any amount of time spent with practitioners would make that evidently clear to even the most uninformed. The innate human abilities to run, crawl, climb and jump are demonstrated across many sports and their disciplines involving such locomotive expressions of the human body. The physical characteristics demonstrated with techniques such as moving over obstacles are no more connected to gymnastics as they are to other athletic disciplines such as the heptathlon, pentathlon or the more generalist approach of the decathlon which is far closer to the work of the physical education pioneers such as Georges Hébert who you choose to reference. The work of Hébert also included the ability to throw, catch, swim and to fight yet there has been no such encroachment by those sports or activities by FIG or your use of them in your desired creation of a 'new' discipline and any associated competitive format(s) for this 'new' discipline. Your aim to maximise on the popularity of Parkour is blatant and a misappropriation and encroachment.

The generalist nature of movement skills and attributes within Parkour hold many similarities to many other movement disciplines, yet those disciplines do not see fit to make any claims and misappropriate and encroach on Parkour to create a 'new' discipline and any associated competitive format(s). Parkour has inspired a new generation of movers in a way that gymnastics and many other sports have not been able to do. It is also incredible to watch when performed by the elite level practitioners/athletes. Many of the original founders and current top athletes are often described as 'super heroes' for their seemingly impossible yet possible physical feats that they achieve. However, Parkour has its own unique and independent culture from that of the current sport of Gymnastics and its past, in the same way it does from other sports.

The combination of physical, mental and social altruistic aims that you bring attention to within the history of gymnastics and physical education could be argued by many other sporting endeavours. I cannot think of any athlete in any sport who would not state that what they did was a combination of being both mentally and physically creative to some degree and that their participation played a role in contributing towards a greater good. For example, the personal transformative nature and positive outcomes gained from participating in martial arts has long been researched as a way to counter the arguments that it is 'teaching people to fight'.

As the Parkour UK open letter states, “**If** any ‘competition(s) and/or competitive format’ for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement are to be developed, this should be in accordance with the freely expressed will and desire of the collective international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right **we**, as a sovereign international community, and not FIG should freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development.”

You have chosen to quote me in support of your argument, however, the inclusion of stating “like the original purpose of gymnastics” (and not the sport of gymnastics) I could also have written, “like the original practice of outdoor adventurers and explorers...”.

I understand that it may be convenient for you to position this in your favour, given the current circumstances, yet it is again biased and uniformed when presented with a larger view of the history of various movement and sporting cultures. There are many commonalities across many movement and sporting cultures that combine the physicality of some of the movements within Parkour, it does not make it explicitly linked to the sport of gymnastics and for FIG to therefore lay claim and continue such a blatant encroachment and misappropriation of it. Were it not for the popularity of Parkour and its obvious youth and spectator appeal, I have no doubt this would not be happening.

I therefore support the position of Parkour UK and that of the various National Federations of Parkour that have expressed their support for Parkour UK and the wider international parkour community in the case against FIG over their encroachment and misappropriation of Parkour.

I hope FIG will engage in an open dialogue and recognise the sovereignty and unique nature of the culture and discipline of l’art du Déplacement / parkour / freerunning.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Angel', with a stylized, flowing script.

Julie Angel Ph.D