

§ 1. Whether they're cheering in the stadium or yelling at the referee from the sofa, sports fans exist all over the world. The long-term attachment to a particular sport or team appears to develop around the age of eight or nine, and the sport or team a person decides to follow is largely influenced by their social circle rather than their personal participation in a sport. Research into the psychology of sports fans has revealed some common principles that apply to the behaviour of most fans.

§ 2. Have you ever heard a sports fan boasting, "We're top of the league at the moment?" They choose to use the pronoun "we" to report their team's performance. Fans' use of "we" to talk about their favourite team demonstrates the strong sense of identity fans feel with their club. When their team is doing well, they enjoy experiencing the victory as if they had played a part in the success themselves.

§ 3. The opposite of this often happens after a team suffers a defeat. Fans in this case may refer to the team as "they" in order to **distance** themselves from their team's disappointing match result. They will be unlikely to wear any clothing that identifies them as a supporter after losing to a rival team. However, this is not the case with fiercely loyal or "true" fans. They will carry on wearing their team scarf even when their team performs badly and will say with genuine sadness, "They beat us three nil."

§ 4. Psychologists have also studied the way in which fans change while watching their chosen sport. Someone who is usually shy and quiet can be seen shouting, screaming and jumping while watching their favourite team play. The effect of being in a crowd of spectators enjoying the same activity allows people to become less self-conscious and more confident. For many, a live sporting event is the only place they feel comfortable showing their feelings openly in public. It can be a great way to relieve stress and improve personal well-being.

§ 5. Finally, most interesting is the way in which sports fans swear by their superstitions or lucky charms.

Wearing a certain item of clothing or carrying a "lucky" object is common practice for many. People who may not be superstitious in any other aspect of their life will **claim** that wearing a certain item of "lucky" clothing will make their team play better. Of course in reality it doesn't matter whether you have your lucky coin, but superstitions are taken very seriously by sports fans and I for one would not like to try and persuade them otherwise!

Определите значение указанного слова в тексте: claim (§ 5).

- 1) promise 2) state 3) pretend