

Avery Brundage on Amateur Sport and Broken Time

(Following article was meant for "World Sports," London and written in 1948.)

Britain having long been considered the very citadel of amateurism, one must approach the problem of the preparation of an article on this subject for a British publication with a certain amount of diffidence, and with the proper spirit of humility. But the world (including even conservative old England) is at present filled with queer ideas, strange political and philosophical doctrines, and curious aberrations. Words have been given distorted meanings, far from their real sense, and fundamental principles are being forgotten or ignored. It is so also in the world of sport and, perhaps, a few basic observations may not be out of order.

Inasmuch as we are dealing with sport and with sport only, we must remember what sport is. According to the dictionary, sport is a pastime and a diversion ; it is play ; it is action for amusement ; it is something opposed to work ; it is free, spontaneous, joyous ; it is an activity for recreation. The minute sport becomes anything more than this, it is work or business, and not sport. Sport, if it is truly sports, is purely incidental to, and does not interfere with, the main business of life. It is an avocation ; not a vocation.

Most athletic competition is by boys and girls, by young women and young men. For many quite obvious reasons they must not be given an exaggerated idea of the importance of sport. It must not be allowed to interfere with the acquisition of an education, or with the pursuit of a trade or a profession. To keep sport in its proper place is one of the obligations of the governing bodies of amateur sport.

Almost any kind of activity can be either play or work, depending on the attitude of the person involved. A man may lay bricks because he wants to earn \$ 2.00 an hour, or he may lay bricks because he gets a thrill out of it, and thinks it fun to lay them faster and more efficiently, or better and more beautifully, whether anyone is watching him or not. In one case he is a bricklayer, in the other he is a sportsman. It is the same with football, or fishing, or foot racing, or any other activity.

Since amateurism is a thing of the spirit, it is not a simple matter to draft rules on such a delicate subject to cover all cases. However, through the efforts of various governing bodies and interested sports leaders, a code of amateurism, based on the true meaning of the word, and fairly well recognised in most sports and games, and in most sections of the world, has been established. The old British definition of an amateur sportsman, which barred "mechanics, artisans or labourers," has been long since discarded — social distinctions do not enter into amateurism. Neither do racial, religious, or financial distinctions, or those of experience, ability, or skill. An amateur sportsman may be rich or poor ; he may be uneducated or a doctor of philosophy ; he may be a beginner, or he may have had years of experience ; he may be a champion or he may be a dud ; but he must be a good sportsman. He must comport himself as a gentleman with proper regard for the rights of others, he must be participating solely for the love of the game, and it must be an avocation, and not his principal occupation.

The definition recently adopted by the International Olympic Committee, which applies to all who wish to take part in the Olympic Games, is :

"An amateur is one whose connection with sport is and always has been solely for pleasure, and for the physical, mental or social benefits he derives therefrom, and to whom sport is nothing more than recreation, without material gain of any kind, direct or indirect."

The title of this article is really redundant in that sport to be sport must be amateur. If it is not amateur, it is work or business, and the participant is a professional.

POST-WAR DRIVE

Since the recent war there has been a determined drive by various individuals and groups to change the rules to permit payment to amateur athletes for time lost from their work by reasons of their sport activities. The fact that such payments would automatically make the recipients professionals, and make

the competitions work and not play, no matter how the rules are manipulated or definitions changed, is completely ignored. If it is sport it must be play ; play must not interfere with the main business of life, and play does not permit any payment for the time involved. An athlete is an amateur only so long as he is competing for the love of the sport.

The moment that financial, commercial, or political considerations intrude, he is no longer an amateur. The theory that an athlete should be reimbursed for something he has lost because he entered a competition is utterly foreign to the spirit of sport. In a free world a man is entitled to a choice, but he cannot make his choice and then demand what was lost by making that choice.

It is urged that an athlete is like a soldier defending his country's athletic reputation and, therefore, not only his expenses should be paid (which is allowed by the rules), but also that his dependants should be supported during his absence for competition. "No athlete should be deprived of the honour of representing his country," they say. Specious arguments of this kind may sound convincing to the uninformed, but they have no place in an amateur sport discussion.

Even if the principle of permitting payment for broken time were adopted, its administration would lead to endless bickering. Who would determine when it was to be applied, and how much was to be paid ? Logically, a man who lost a thousand dollar commission or bonus because of his competition would be just as much entitled to reimbursement as a man who lost \$ 10.00 in wages. If one member of a team is paid, all of the other members will feel that they are equally entitled to payment. If a competitor is paid enough to support his wife, why should he not be given enough to support his mother, his -aunt, or his grandmother ? If an athlete is paid for time lost while competing, why should he not be paid for time lost while training ? If he is paid for time lost during Olympic Games, is there any reason why he should not be paid while competing in international, or national, or regional, or local championships, or any other event ? The door would be open to a thousand abuses. Champion athletes in great demand, if paid for broken time, would be tempted to do nothing but compete.

In the United States, even without payment for broken time, in some sports in past years because of laxity in the regulations, we have seen "amateur" athletes spending all their time competing, and living entirely on their excessive expense accounts. In ancient Greece, Xenophanes wrote : "Although there are ten thousand evils throughout Greece, there is nothing worse than the tribe of athletes." This was after the high ideals of amateurism, which had as their aim a symmetrical and harmonious development of mind and body for all persons, had been

lost because of the evils that developed through overemphasis.

A Hungarian friend once brought to my attention an excellent example of what happens when the bars are lowered : "In Hungary, payment for broken time began in soccer football in 1921. In a few months six stages were passed :

1. *Payment for time lost in international competition.*
2. *Payment for time lost in league competition.*
3. *Payment for time lost in all competitions.*
4. *Payment for broken time for training.*
5. *Payment for broken time for "bath and massage."*
6. *It became too complicated to calculate, so a lump sum was paid every month.*

Thus payment for broken time soon became a real salary and the players refused to work at all, stating that they would make less money if they worked than if they "played."

Amateur sport, and the Olympic movement, its most important manifestation, have in the half century since the Olympic Games were revived in 1896, spread throughout the civilised world with amazing rapidity. Nothing like it has ever been seen before. One important reason is the high ideals of amateurism and good sportsmanship involved. If there have been sacrifices, the rewards have been more than sufficient to offset them.

Now, after sixty years of progress, during which the prestige and importance of amateur sport have increased apace, it is proposed to make a fundamental change in the regulations, which would be morally dishonest, because the players would be paid for work they did not do. The essence of sport is that it is played for its own sake. Payment for broken time is entirely counter to the basic principles of amateurism. It is also counter to the Olympic rule which I have quoted, since, if an athlete is paid for work he has not done, he has made a "material gain."

Adoption of a rule permitting payment for broken time would soon wreck the entire structure of amateur sport as we know it.
