

PRESTIGE

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One has had the opportunity of reading recently the fact that the leaders controlling the sports of a certain country had given as a reason for preventing their runners to compete abroad the care of defending the prestige of the nation.

Following the elimination of his national football team from the World's Football Cup, one heard a delegate belonging to the said country ask the following question : « Does defeat in the sportsfield engage the prestige of the country ? » The answer was in the affirmative.

Such way of thinking is not new. Many countries look upon achievements in sports as the best form of propaganda.

One can but approve as long as one remains within the reasonable limits of emulation on the national as well as on the international basis. But one must also watch for the abuse which competition may be likely to bring about.

Sport must remain a game which is thrilling, entrancing but must not be passionate. To place achievements in sport under the sign of national prestige is to exceed the limit of reason.

Every contest calls for a winner or a loser. That the victorious should be honoured is quite in order, but that the vanquished should be held in disgrace is inadmissible ! That the prestige of the country to which they belong should be affected by their defeat is equally inadmissible !

This does not mean that one should fall from one extreme to another. A government which takes no interest and is indifferent to sport would fail to discharge one of its duty. A defeat means nothing, but the mediocrity of the total results of the performances of a country must be looked upon as a sign of warning.

The physical and spiritual health of a nation are the things that matter above everything.