

The Essential Thing is to take part...

Vico Rigassi, the excellent journalist from Geneva, published last October, an article in the *Semaine Sportive* from which we reproduce the following extract :

“It is sufficient to glance at the various selections of the teams taking part in the Games in Melbourne, to see that the adage of the late Pierre de Coubertin that ‘the

essential thing is to take part etc...’ became a dead letter ages ago.” In order to illustrate his point, Rigassi quotes the case of a ‘certain country’ whose chief aim is to collect as many victories as possible, in order to assert herself over the athletes of ‘another country’ (one cannot hide anything from you ! *Ed.*). Rigassi acknowledges the fact that

there has obviously been a great struggle in order to achieve this predominance but it has lost its noble purpose. Let us mention another side of the story more pertinently expressed by Harry Valerien of Radio München. It deserves to be known : "The German delegation sent to the Melbourne Games was limited to 100 athletes. Why ? It is certainly not a matter of winning medals only. Do not Germany possess in the field of sport quantities of women and men champions who have the moral qualities as well as the spirit of sportsmanship to justify a voyage which would let them participate once in their lives, in the greatest

sport festival ever held, even if they had to partake in the finals as mere spectators ?... As well as this, nobody ever reflects what an athlete can derive from the experience of suffering defeat at the hands of great champions, nor what benefit he may gain by this defeat and how it may profit his trainers or his fellow sportsmen... Seen under this angle, the sending to Melbourne of a large number of athletes takes a deeper significance, for, sport does not consist only of gold, silver and bronze medals."

The essential is indeed not to win but to take part... and this is truer than ever.