

An opinion . . .

Let the Melbourne Games be a lesson

The Olympic ideal has triumphed once more...but it is time to think of modernizing

Olympism... by Gaston Meyer of l'Equipe, Paris

The greatest show on earth had its final curtain in Melbourne, when the Flame died down ; but it will shine brighter and finer than ever in Rome in four years time, and four years are soon over.

Last November, the outlook with regard to the political situation was far from reassuring, when the world woke up to the sounds of guns ! Some people entertained serious doubts whether it was wise to allow the massing of the cream of the youth of all countries, meeting in this remote part of the world at such a critical time. There were also those who questioned the organizing capabilities of that country, and wondered if the organizers fully grasped the importance of the task confronting them.

We knew that Melbourne could not wipe out the memory of Helsinki, the capital of

Finland, the finest sport paradise on the face of the earth ! We also knew that the season chosen for holding the Games with the extremes of temperature of the Australian climate might present a serious handicap both to the training and efficiency of the competitors. But with respect to this, we were agreeably surprised. Generally speaking, the organization could have been better, the technical aspect of the events better tested, the contests fiercer and the performances finer, but, on the whole the sport aspect of the Games has been a definite success.

Is it possibly due to the influence however small of the Olympic Games that, a week before the official opening, about November 15th, the threatening noise of war cries died down ? We did notice however that a kind

of tacit truce set in and a break in the provocative talks... The exploits of Bobby Morrow and Vladimir Kuts followed by the fine performance of Jon Henriks and those of Murray Rose, the four outstanding names of these Games, did contribute, for the time being, in diverting the public attention from the tragic happenings which cast a gloom over the world.

The true olympic spirit was saved, and reigned throughout the Games at Melbourne. By a miracle, the Hungarian team was able to take part in the Games and no incident of importance occurred to cast a gloom over the smooth running of the competitions.

Sofia and Amateurism

The time has definitively come when the Olympic Games ought to be modernized. In September of the current year, the International Olympic Committee will meet in Sofia with the sole object of dealing with the problem of amateurism. (The programme of the Games will also be brought up for discussion, *Ed.*) As far as the question of Amateurism is concerned, minds evaluate slowly in their progress. Some people admitted, so far only in private, that if professionals were given the amateur status on the condition of course, that their *sole retribution* would be the medal or diploma they won, amateurism would certainly gain by this... inasmuch that amateurs would only risk the gain of additional glory while the professionals would have no option but to choose between two alternatives: a dishonourable abstention or of jeopardizing their career materially by an eventual defeat. The various countries will have to strive more and more in order to conciliate the two things: the conditions essential to the preparation of the athletes as well as assure their social situation. For having failed to do so, French amateur sport has been responsible for Elouafi, champion of the marathon at the Amsterdam Games, becoming poverty stricken and a waif and stray.

Another important problem deals with the selection of Olympic sports. In order obviously not to increase the financial commitments of the organizing cities, Mr. Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee expressed the opinion that it would be necessary to reduce rather than increase the number of sports.

This opinion strikes me as illogical on two points: it tends to maintain on the existing programme, by force of habit, out of date sports while it excludes from the programme sports which are in full development.

It is evident that if the Olympic Games were to increase their programme by becoming accessible to more sports, they would receive their death warrant through overcrowding (already more than 8,000 competitors are likely to take part in the Games in Rome in 1960).

Two solutions are likely to overcome the difficulty:

Either divide the Summer Games in two parts:

- 1) Spring Games with team and indoor games. (This would give satisfaction to three cities instead of only two.)
- 2) Summer Games with athletics and water sports.

Or alter the programme in order to meet modern requirements.

Thus the only criterion would be the number of countries affiliated to each sport. I am of the opinion that it would be possible to recognize as 'International Olympic Federation' all the international federations which can group 20 nations at the end of the Olympic year preceding the one in which the Games of the next Olympiad are to be held, and on the condition that 12 nations at least guarantee their participation four years in advance.

This Electronic Age

Should neither of these two suggestions meet with approval, it would then be advisable to cut down the programme.

Everyone seems to agree that the first events which ought to be eliminated are shooting and yachting competitions, followed by team sports which are already organizing official World Championships, then the type of sports which are submitted to the arbitration of judges or referees as their adjudication is always a source of controversy; lastly the amateur sports with professional effect, inasmuch that the same federation would be prepared to control both activities; if professionals remain virtually excluded from the Games, the technical value of the competitions is likely to suffer.

The third problem which remains for us to solve, deals with the actual programme, the listing of the events and the control of the results.

It is absurd to go on giving out results at the Games the wrong way up, meaning by this that the best is placed at the beginning and the worst at the end. This more mediocre competitor would be set off if he were given a prominent position and allowed to 'open' the event at the start, the general interest in the Games would thus increase instead of the reverse when they are apt to grow duller.

The way in which the various events are presented and controlled should be based on a scientific basis; the officials, like stagehands should not appear in the eyes of the public. In this electronic age, one cannot go on ignoring the automatic recording of the finishing-post or of the events themselves.