

*Solemn opening ceremony of the*

## **55th Session of the International Olympic Committee**

*Munich, May 23d 1959*

*I hereby have the honour to declare the 55th Session of the International Olympic Committee in Munich open.*

*Address by the President of the International Olympic Committee*

**MR. AVERY BRUNDAGE**

*Prime Minister*

*Ministers of the Bavarian State Government*

*President of the National Olympic Committee of Germany*

*Lord Mayor*

*Dear Colleagues*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*One of the basic principles of the Olympic Movement is that there shall be no discrimination against any country or person because of race, religion or politics. Were this fundamental principle not followed scrupulously, the Olympic Movement would surely founder. It is essential to the success and even to the existence of any truly international body that there are no restrictions of this kind. It is a regulation, however, which has not been easy to enforce.*

*In 1936 there was an organized and well financed, attack on the Games of the XI Olympiad, because certain individuals and groups did not approve of the German Government at that time, although the German Government had nothing to do with the organization or control of the Games. A bitterly fought battle centered in the United States of America, and as the speaker was then President of the United State Olympic Committee, he can testify personally to the viciousness of the contest to prevent a United States team from participating. This struggle was being watched in many other countries which might have been swayed by the result, and had it been lost and the U. S. and other teams withdrawn, the Games might well have been ruined. The outcome, however, was a great victory of Olympic principles and the United States was represented by one of its largest and best teams. One might add that the 1936 Games were one of the greatest and that they were staged in strict conformity with all Olympic regulations.*

*Following the II World War there was another battle, when many opposed the recognition of certain Olympic Committees because of the political complexion of their countries. This battle was also won and the International Olympic Committee granted recognition and opened the Games, as it always has, to all National Olympic Committees which agree to follow the Olympic regulations. It is never governments but only sport organizations which are recognized.*

*In 1956, just before the Games of the XVI Olympiad, there was another intrusion of politics when, following*

the events at Suet and in Budapest in the Fall of that year, certain countries wavered about participating in Melbourne against teams from other countries whose actions they deplored. At that time a statement was issued by the President of the International Olympic Committee, expressing the revulsion of every civilized person at the savage slaughter, but reminding the World that there was no reason to destroy the nucleus of international co-operation and good will that has been created in the Olympic Movement. "The Olympic Games are contests between individuals and not between nations. In an imperfect world, if participation in sport is to be stopped every time the laws of humanity are violated, there will never be any international contests. Is it not better to try to expand the sportsmanship of the athletic field into other areas?" As a result, teams from sixty-seven countries, some even without diplomatic relations, presented themselves at Melbourne and participated in the Games of the XVI Olympiad in a peaceful atmosphere of mutual respect.

The International Olympic Committee has done more than just to resist political pressure — if has some constructive accomplishments to its credit. For a dozen years there have been efforts to unite the two parts of Germany, separated by an artificial boundary drawn after the last World War. In 1956, both at the VI Olympiad Winter Games at Cortina and at the Games of the XVI Olympiad in Australia, a united German team, composed of athletes from each of the two parts, wearing the same uniform and marching with the same flag, participated.

Recently we have once more had evidence of political activity. Some misguided persons seem to think that Olympic sport can be made a political tool. This is as erroneous as anything can be. The minute political activities are permitted in Olympic affairs the Games are finished. Never has the world been so peaceful that countries or political systems were not somewhere at odds. If not a hot, there has always been a cold war of one sort or another — sometimes religious, sometimes racial, sometimes political, and the minute distinctions of this kind are permitted, it is quite obvious that the Games will soon come to an end.

As it is, the Olympic Movement furnishes a conspicuous example that when fair play and good sportsmanship prevail, men can agree, regardless of race, religion or political convictions.

The amazing success of the Olympic Movement in the short period of three score years since the Games were revived by Baron de Coubertin, is almost entirely due to the soundness of the fundamental principles with which he equipped them. Unfortunately, many of the articles and reports on the Games that one reads today display a complete ignorance of this Olympic philosophy. If it is said that these basic principles of the Olympic Movement, which account for its universal appeal and its tremendous success, are understood by so few people.

Modern journalism, seeking sensation, has taken over the Games, overemphasized the competitive sport features, overstressed record breaking, and national rivalries, and in general ignored the noble and idealistic real objectives of the Olympic Movement. Humanity is not perfect and violations of the Olympic spirit do occur. These are magnified by writers and commentators, the slightest flaw appears in the headlines, and all the tremendous accomplishments, the progress toward a healthier, happier and more peaceful world, which have come about because of the revival of the Olympic Games are ignored and forgotten. The marvel is, considering political conditions, and the materialism of our times, that there are any Olympic Games at all.

Baron de Coubertin was not a sports promoter — he was a scholar and an educator, and he was the first in modern times to recognize that more than just

physical benefits can be gained from properly organized athletic sports and games. He perceived that there were also fine cultural and more qualities to be acquired. He had studied Greek history and he knew the significant role in Greek civilization played by the Olympic Games for twelve centuries. He knew the Greek gods were not only wise and intelligent but also physically perfect; an inspiration to mankind to seek a like all-around physical, mental and moral development. He knew that, in those days, athletes met philosophers, dramatists, sculptors and poets on common ground. Plato, the great thinker, was also a great athlete. He knew the Golden Age of Pericles, of the men of Thermopylae and of Marathon; and he knew of the stalwart legions of Alexander the Great. He knew that the ancient Olympic Games were a dignified religious, sport, and fine arts festival, amateur in essence, emphasizing grace and beauty of body, mind and spirit. He knew of the Olympic truce, during which all warfare stopped during the period of the Games. He knew of the overemphasis, the proselyting and the professionalism that developed, the loss of Spartan virtues and the forgotten self-discipline as the Greeks grew soft, morally and physically. He knew of the scorn of the Greek scholars and philosophers for the commercialization of the Games, and for over-developed professional athletes. He knew of the downfall of Greece that followed the corruption and loss of ideals, of the conquest by Rome and finally of the abolition of the Olympic Games. With great sagacity and with remarkable prescience he devised the rules and regulations, which, if followed, would prevent similar troubles in the future.

Although he had observed the beneficial effects of competitive sports, where they were first developed in the XIX Century, in England and in the United States, and he hoped to develop a general interest in physical training and athletic sports in all countries, he certainly did not revive the Olympic Games just to break records and win medals, nor for the entertainment of the masses. It was primarily for their broad cultural values which he felt would lead to a better and a happier world.

First and foremost, for good reason, they were made strictly amateur. They are not a commercial enterprise, and no one, promoters, managers, officials, or participants, individuals or countries, are supposed to try to use them for profit.

One of the silliest proposals which has been made is that the Olympic Games should be thrown open to professional athletes. One reason advanced is that not all the competitors have been amateurs. If this is the case it is certainly not the fault of the International Olympic Committee. By this time everyone knows the Olympic rules. Every competitor in the Olympic Games must sign an entry blank, testifying that he is an amateur according to the regulations, and this must be certified by his National Federation and by his National Olympic Committee. If any non-amateur has participated in the Olympic Games, at least three people have lied. Because there is cheating crime and dishonesty in the world, shall we abolish all laws and return to the jungle?

Perhaps much of the difficulty arises from the fact that amateurism is not generally understood; in fact, it is widely misunderstood by those who classify an amateur as a tyro, a neophyte, a beginner, or someone not good enough to be a professional. There is also confusion on the matter of sportsmanship. A professional athlete can be and often is just as good a sportsman as an amateur. The thing that is not understood is that amateurism is a philosophy of life, a consecration and devotion to the actual task at hand rather than to the payment or to the reward. It is the same devotion that in scholars and scientists has led to the acquisition of knowledge and to the

advancement of civilization. It is the same devotion that has actuated the great artists and musicians who have starved in garrets rather than commercialize their work. It is the same devotion that, in the great patriotic leaders in all countries, has produced all social progress. It is the same devotion that has actuated the unknown sculptors and architects who created the great buildings and cathedrals of the world without even signing their work. It is the same devotion that guided Henry Ford and Thomas Edison to their achievements in the industrial world, which they would have accomplished even if they had never won a fortune. It is a philosophy of life badly needed in these materialistic times, when all that many workers think of is pay day and quitting time.

This, of course, is a strange conception in the materialistic world in which we live, where everything seems to be measured by dollars, but there are certain qualities in life, like charity, patriotism, love, and friendship, that are not measured in dollars. Amateuism is one of these and the world would be a sorry place without them.

An amateur sportsman knows that sport is recreation, play, fun, and an avocation, and has his eyes on a higher goal, the main business of his life — his education or his vocation. He does not want to waste his valuable time as a professional entertainer.

He does not want to be part of a troop of trained seals for the amusement of the public — he plays for his own entertainment. He always does the best he can in the circumstances and he acquires a lot of valuable experiences and qualities. The man who climbs the Matterhorn or who runs a four minute mile does not expect to find a pot of gold when he arrives. He has not conquered Nature, he has conquered himself and he has the great, never-to-be-forgotten self-satisfaction and pleasure that follows.

The amateur has an entirely different philosophy than the professional athlete, who does nothing unless he is paid. With a professional, sport is a vocation and his main objective is to win, because the more he wins the better he is paid. The amateur also wants to win, but it is the manner in which victory is won that is most important to him. He wants always to improve and he wants always to do his best in the circumstances that prevail, but he does not wish to sacrifice his education or his vocation for a hollow victory. Amateur sport organizations must point out to the public and to their members, these great advantages of amateuism as a philosophy of life.

We have no quarrel with the honest professionals who have every right to go into moving pictures or television, or any other branch of the entertainment business. It is only those who dishonestly try to pretend to be amateur who are cheating and deserve censure. To admit professionals would change the entire character of the Olympic Games, which exist only because of the interest and devotion of countless amateur officials in National Olympic Committees,

National Federations, and in International Federations, who give of their time and energy for the sake of the cause. There is nothing to prevent professional athletes from organizing their own games if they so desire, but let them keep out of the Olympic Games, where they are not wanted. The introduction of professionalism and the resultant commercialization of the Olympic Games would destroy all their delicate and subtle values and one would have nothing but a cold and mercenary business enterprise. The Olympic Games must be kept strictly amateur, free from political intrigue and dollar signs, and without racial, religious or political discrimination, as they were designed by the Baron de Coubertin and have been continued up to this date by the International Olympic Committee.