

# Modern Amateurism and the Olympic Code

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The first of all rules for securing desired action among men is to arouse enthusiasm, to give such action the aura of adventure, of a challenge which demands almost as much as it is likely to give. In contrast, to define our goals or write our codes in terms of restrictions upon interest and effort will either destroy both, or more likely (for human impulsions to action can never be chained) will lead to complete denial and non-observance of our codes.

Most unfortunately codes of amateurism in sports today find themselves in this latter position, comparable to that of the prohibition of alcohol in the United States in the 1920s. True, there seems to have been fewer violations of amateur rules recently, at least fewer have made newspaper headlines. But one of the characteristics of a critical period in social affairs is just such lack of attention and interest.

Certainly not even the most enthusiastic proponents of amateurism could claim there is a widespread agreement on its basic tenets or that a sense of pride or enthusiasm exists among its followers. For most, amateurism is primarily negative, a denial of gain from sports participation in a society where material gain is the most common measure of achievement.

Amateur sports officials, the International Olympic Committee, Athletic Amateur Union etc. have a tendency to assume that our culture is to blame or that individual greed is primarily at fault. But another possibility is that the code under which amateurs are supposed to act has lost its meaning, or worse, that its words were unwisely chosen and have failed to fill the need for which they were intended.

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As with all social codes, amateur definitions and rules need to be re-assessed from time to time, not to adapt them to the temporary needs of a particular time or nation or culture, not to bring them down to earth as defined by any narrow group, but rather to be certain that they meet the long-time and widespread needs of society in general. The Olympic code is not sacred, not final, not above revision.

To put it bluntly it is our contention (1) that the words of the Olympic code of amateurism are more narrow and restrictive than any sound statement of human conduct can allow, (2) that they say what they do not mean, and (3) that they are not clear as to the real value and purpose of amateurism.

The 1958 Olympic code book states:

*An amateur is one who participates and always has participated in sport solely for pleasure and for the physical, mental or social benefits he derives therefrom, and to whom participation in sport is nothing more than recreation without material gain of any kind, direct or indirect. In addition, he must comply with the rules of the International Federation concerned.*

We would first point out that this definition begins too narrowly: 'An amateur is one who.' The intent of any such definition is to establish a special group of athletes throughout a populous and varied world, different in some regard from all other groups. Obviously the motives, degrees of effort, environmental problems of such a group exist, not at one level, but within a wide range. There exists a wide range of individual differences but equally of worldwide cultural differences in any one year but even more so within the centuries of sport.

A wisely stated code must be precise and clear in stating its essential purpose and in identifying the group it wishes to exclude; yet it must be broad and flexible enough to include all ranges of non-essential differences within its favoured group. Far better, then, to begin our code with 'amateurs in sports are those who—', or 'amateurism in sports is characterized by—'

Second, the narrow beginning of the Olympic code is greatly intensified by the words that follow: 'who participates and always has participated in sports solely for pleasure—' and later by the phrase 'nothing more than recreation—'. This is a breakdown of word meanings: only if one finds pleasure in pain and recreation in sweaty hard work can such a use of terms be justified. It was no more a pleasure or a recreation in 1896 to run a time trial at 3/4 distance than it is today to run 10,440s at racing pace within 40 minutes. Satisfaction in retrospect, yes; self-respect and even joy at achievement, yes, re-creation through self-improvement, yes, but pleasant recreation, no, whether you turn to the English Oxford dictionary or to the American Webster's. Read over Webster's synonyms for pleasure (delight, delectation, gladness, joy, enjoyment) and ask if they are consistent with what is required of any sportsman who has achieved Olympic status either in the day of those who wrote the definition or at Melbourne in 1956. Consider the words, 'and always has participated... solely for pleasure'. Only he is an amateur.

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To heighten the unreality of the present code, let us digress at this point and discuss a few problems with which modern amateur sportsmen are beset. If sports codes have been expressed with clear vision and wisdom, they should suggest solutions to such problems. Not easy or simple or complete solutions, for what ideal was ever easy to attain. But there should be at least a general guide as to direction, or a cue to proper action.

All modern sports systems that train for maximum performance in endurance, strength, or speed are based primarily upon intensity of effort during a relatively short practice session, achieved gradually during year-round and multi-year practice but hurried in most instances by the demands of personal ambition and institutional competitive schedules.

For example, interval training or progressive repetition training, as followed by most runners and many swimmers today, is a system of progressive overloading whereby any given workout produces as many states of maximum oxygen debt as time and individual fitness will permit. Repeated bursts of high speed running are interspersed with very short periods of restful jogging. Most jog about 3 to 5 minutes; some as little as 20 seconds. Repeated and gradually increased overloading is presumed to produce ever-increased response. The only bases for judging how much is enough are the feelings of the runner and the fallible judgment of the coach who often is working with large numbers of men in different events at the same time. Roger Bannister, M.D. astounded the world with a 'super-human' better-than-4 minute mile some five years ago. One of his best practice efforts included 10 quarter-miles with an average time of 58.8 seconds within 40 minutes total time. In 1954 this was considered remarkable. But Delaney, the 1956 Olympic champion, achieved 16 such quarters, and in 1958 Armas Valste, head coach of Finland, stated that his most outstanding 1500 meter man had averaged an amazing 53.8 for 10 quarters in 40 minutes.

It would be difficult indeed to bring such efforts within generally accepted definitions of pleasure or recreation. On the other hand the bull-frog should neither imitate nor judge the bull. These men are physical geniuses trained gradually to do work that is consistent with their abilities. To quote Cerutti, the amazing philosopher-coach of Australia's greatest runners, 'the key to success lies in work, exhausting soul-killing work.' (Soul-killing work by accepted amateurs?) But Cerutti quickly adds, 'even such work seems only fun, exhilarating, satisfying fun 'when motivations are high, distractions are absent, and the environment is soul-refreshing as at his Camp Portsea.

But this is an uncommon approach to fun, one that would be unthinkable to ordinary

mortals who comprise the bulk of sports amateurs. The spelling may be the same but the word has been transmuted.

In this regard, modern competitive sportsmen seldom use the words recreation or play. By and large, recreation is activity with little or no extrinsic motivation. It is done for the joy of playing and stops whenever the discomforts of fatigue or a change of interest may decide. In contrast, sports practice is accepted as work, activity that is done for reasons outside the action itself. (Even the Olympic code concedes this in part by admitting 'social benefits' as a worthy motive.) The American term for practice is 'work-out'. We ask how much and what kind of work was done. Any varsity man that inquires about how much he should play today or whether such recreation isn't a little too strenuous or if the team was practising 'solely for pleasure' would be laughed or fired from the squad.

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Amateur sports practice is work, not recreation, unless we so define our terms as to confuse their meanings entirely. To be sure, this does not mean it is all work. Common sense requires a strong element of fun if high motivation is to be maintained. Sweden has coined the term, 'Fartlek' or 'Speed-Play' to describe its system of training and stresses soft pine-needled paths around beautiful lakes as well as self-direction to create more of the fun-spirit. At the world-shaking U.S.S.R.-U.S.A. dual track in Philadelphia, last July, we were amazed when the supposedly grim Russians requested a number of soccer balls during pro-meet practice and played for the sheer joy of it. Their laughter in practice during this crucial period was a delight to hear. Obviously they recognize that pleasant recreation is an essential part of any system of training. But it is the salt of training, not its meat and bread.

Wisdom in amateur sports codes must recognize that, even when the demands of national supremacy are absent (an ideal hard to visualize today and for some time in the future), individual human impulsions to do and to know more and better cannot be strait-jacketed. They can only be restrained or slowed as safety, health, or such concepts as fair play may require.

More and harder work is but one aspect of such attempts. Consider this statement of sports practice:

*A man, not a simple machine, puts the shot; a man who has inner reserves of force that are not available under conditions of normal stress. To complicate the problem, when extreme emotional states exist but are uncontrolled, they tend to diffuse, discoordinate, and even block off these forces. Not only must they be aroused; equally important, their efforts must be channeled into the muscle groups and actions that are wanted.*

*Some men seem to have a natural aptitude for this. Parry O' Brien, world's record shot-putter, attempted a program of arousing and using the emotions which was just as deliberate and constantly practiced as were the skills of putting. He tried to learn all he could from such diverse areas as Indian yogi self-hypnosis, concentration in both practice and competition, suggestion during sleeping hours, mental practice, and any and every way of arousing emotional stress.*

Can such efforts come within the scope of recreation? Further, there are increasing reports that hypnosis is contributing to sports success. Two pupils, one of junior age, of 'Australia's most controversial coach, Forbes Carlile', have now broken international records after being hypnotized.

*His first hypnotic success came in February, 1955, when Gary Winram won the Australian 1650 yard free-style title. Carlile hypnotized Winram before the race, telling him he would not feel tired and that the farther he went the faster he would get. Winram raced to victory in the fastest time ever recorded for the event.*

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Another area of activity which will increasingly affect future interpretations of Olympic amateur codes lies in the use of science to improve sports performance. This use takes many forms. For example, for some years, efforts have been made by sports coaches and interested scientists to discover a valid, reliable, and simple measure of running condition and of the effects of fixed units of work upon individual fatigue and improvement.

Space limits documentation but since 1935 Woldemar Gerschler and associated scientists at the University of Freiburg, Germany, have experimented along these lines. In fact he is generally credited with systematizing modern interval training. Gerschler has trained many world-class runners, including the all-time great, Rudolph Harbig. In each case, he insists upon a complete and detailed medical analysis, not merely for health and safety but as a basis for work assignments. The immediate and long-time effects of training are observed by similar methods. Comments by Russian coaches indicate that similar efforts are being made at the Central Physical Culture Research Institute in Moscow.

A second effect of science upon sports, which has created such a furor recently and is certain to increase greatly in the future, is the use of drugs to improve performance. Only last May, Dr. Allan J. Ryan, chairman of a Committee on *Amphetamines and Athletics*, reported in the *A.M.A. Journal* (1) that amphetamines can artificially improve performance beyond the ordinary capabilities of most athletes, (2) that the use of amphetamines is known in many instances to result

in habituation and harmful effects, (3) that there is an extensive illegal traffic in amphetamines in the United States, (4) that their use is in violation of both the word and spirit of all amateur sports codes, and (5) that less than one per cent of 1800 college and high school coaches polled throughout the United States claimed that they had ever administered amphetamines.

The pros and cons of this problem (and there are at least two valid sides to it) are outside the purpose of this paper. But again it indicates how wide a range of effort must be covered by our amateur sports code. It should be clear that the purpose of such efforts is to bring performance in sports nearer and nearer to physiological limits. Whether this is within the demands of safety and good health is the concern of medicine, more specifically, of sports medicine, a growing movement throughout the world. But it is certain that our present code of amateurism could never bless such all-out efforts even if word meanings are stretched beyond all reasonableness.

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What then should be our definition of amateurism? To answer that properly, with proper support for its viewpoints would require a volume. Here we are limited to a few sentences.

First of all, it must be pointed out that the basic concern of amateur sportsmen has always been to secure fair competition with more or less equal opportunity for preparation. In its modern beginnings the English nobility broadened the word, *fair* to mean gentlemanly with a disparagement of serious effort and sweat. Deliberate preparation was frowned upon; all practice should be at the fun level; to admit having worked hard at it was to be subject to ridicule, to be compared with the footman hired to run professionally for his lord. Material gain was not, in itself, an issue. Histories of sport during this period relate that betting upon one's own performance was an accepted part of the game. But such betting was quite a different matter from participating in sport deliberately for material gain, for wages. Not only was this plebeian; it inevitably led to methods and degrees of preparation which were unfair, for they produced performances beyond the power of the dilettante amateur. Therefore the two parts of the amateur code: first that participation should be 'gentlemanly', that is, solely for pleasure; and second, that wages, 'material gain of any kind, direct or indirect', could never result from it. But it should be clear that, even then, the intent basically was to assure fair competition. At that time this meant competition with one's peers in the double sense of similar preparation and social status. Gradually the latter meaning has dropped away. In fact, as will be explained later, this change has come about full circle. The time is here when the leisure classes with their unlimited time for practice

can no longer be accepted within amateur ranks. Preparation is limited now, not by nobility's dislike for sweat and self-discipline, but for the opposite reason, by the more primary requirements of vocation and an active life.

Today, a true amateur, as we view him, is one who has major work to do, apart from his sport, which requires a major portion of his time, his energy, and his interest. An amateur therefore has only a lesser portion of these to devote to sport. He has a full-time vocation; he is a full-time student; he is an armed service man with regular full-time duties. Not only does this leave something less than three hours per day for practice, an amateur's so-called nervous energy is normally reduced by a thousand tiny worries and distractions of normal living.

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This concept of amateurism is disturbing to many accredited amateurs who abide by all the rules as to material rewards, but who have been able, through personal affluence or the mis-guided leniency of industry, schools or armed services, to devote themselves wholly and with little regard for limitations, to excellence in their sport. But this does not deny its truth. Delightful as they may be in their devotion to sport and their carefree approach to life, marvellous as may be their world record performance, these are not our real amateurs.

In summary then, we conceive amateurism in sports as a working agreement by which sportsmen, on their honor, try to secure fair organized competition through an accepted code of rules and such equality of opportunity for preparation as is practicable.

Amateurs in sports are those:

(1) who participate primarily because vigorous competitive activity is natural and fun and because of the social benefits they derive therefrom, and

(2) who participate within a wide range of interest and effort: from solely for pleasure to relentless hard work, but always within the limitations inherent in a well-rounded life: a full-time school, vocational, armed service or other program not directly related to sports, and

(3) who participate without material gain of any kind, direct or indirect.

It would be a serious error to conclude that this new approach to amateurism is primarily negative, a means of de-emphasizing sports values by adding new limitations to present limitation of reward. On the contrary the new amateurism is a positive idea, an affirmation of sports, which frees them and

the sportsman from the half-heartedness and uncertainty of the past. Now his task is clear, one into which he can throw himself with no qualms of conscience. His major work, his studies or his job, has been done, or at least has been given its proper portion of time. Now, even though his time is limited and perhaps inadequate, he can concentrate completely upon sports. Even such life essentials as eating or sleeping are mere distractions to be disciplined 'out-of-mind' until practice is over.

Does this mean a limitation upon ultimate performance? It may be that Lawrence Morehouse is right when he states in his widely used *Physiology of Exercise*, 'in general, improvement in endurance is determined by the length of the workout period', but we still have very recent examples in Courtney, Delany, Bannister, Landy and a host of others that world level performances can still be achieved through progressively more intense, year-round training within an average of less than two hours per day.

An important percentage of college athletes feel and express occasionally a lukewarm, even apologetic ambition for their sport. 'Coach, I want to make it clear that I've come to college for my studies; sports can't ever be very important. I don't want to be a jock'.

The coach then has several alternatives. If his men are largely subsidized - room, board, tuition, - the student-athlete is likely to be quickly cut from the squad or so ignored as to cut himself. Other coaches accept lukewarmness as a beginning but plan their campaign to change it to all-out enthusiasm during coming months. A few will take such young men aside and attempt to clarify their thinking. 'When you say studies come first, you're right, but that doesn't mean they are the whole of college life. Give them major time, interest, energy if you will, but once they've had it, turn to your secondary interests with complete enthusiasm and concentration. Do one thing at a time, and do it all-out, as though it were the whole. The crucial thing is organization of time'. He may never mention the word, but he's using the language of amateurism.

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Amateurism is not at all a complex idea. On the contrary it is based upon simplicity, upon doing one thing at a time. First things must come first; other things, later. Sport can be only one of the other things, a lesser value in the whole of life, but within its time, a matter of supreme worth in which a man can and should lose himself completely, with no distracting doubts about relative values.

In this sense amateurism is simply good life-management: allotment of the hours of

each day in terms of relative values; time therefore for several pursuits, to keep life broad and interesting, with full zest and zeal for each of them.

As I re-read what has been written, it comes with almost a shock, certainly with pleasure, that these paragraphs describe the best of the champions I have coached during the past thirty years. As they entered the practice field, they were all business. They didn't have much time, certainly not enough in which to do all they wanted to do. They went right to work, with no dallying over discussions of last week-end's social affairs or this morning's history examination. Very few of these champions spent long hours on the field; they couldn't afford so much time. They typified the old adage, 'if you want something done well, give it to a busy man'.

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One also realizes with great pleasure that this new approach is consistent with the growing practice of better colleges and college conferences in the United States. We must plead at least partly guilty to European charges that American college sports scholarships are illegal by Olympic code requirements. But the increasing requirements of American academic programs have forced upon us an all too limited time for sports preparation. This has been a gradual development of several decades but as the Clemson football coach remarked on the new zeal for increasing science courses. 'When those Russians shot that sputnik up, they sure played hell with college football'. There are few exceptions today among our hundreds of colleges to the rule that athletes must be regular full-time students, making normal progress toward a degree. In this respect, at least, our college sports are ahead of the Olympic code writers. If only one could say as much for general practice within our armed services and those of other countries.

Up to this point, we have written only of definitions and codes. The problem of legislation and enforcement is an even greater matter. Present restrictions on material rewards change only in relative emphasis, as means rather than as primary ends. But they must be supplemented by a world-wide emphasis upon limitation of practice time. Affidavits will need to be filed for each athlete, signed by responsible officials of industry, armed service, school, or professional organization, which verify that he has carried a full-time load of work during the past year and has had no special vacation periods for training purposes.

The question arises immediately as to the feasibility of such procedures and whether they are worth the red tape that will be added to an already burdensome load. The answer to the first is that they will be at least as feasible as the matter of material reward. But more than that, this program has the great advantage of being a new and interesting challenge. There is a certain

spirit of adventure in a self-imposed discipline, in emphasizing quality of practice rather than the drudgery of mere quantity of work. American colleges have already proved that mutual respect, even pride, arises among those who are busy men, who have important work to do in limited time which forces them to organize their time and energies so as to give their best to each phase of living. The so-called Ivy League certainly feels this and there are many others. It is a pride of mature men who have a sense of purpose and service, as contrasted to that of the 19th century when recreation and pleasure were considered sufficient goals for sports.

Except where special courses of study for athletes give them unlimited time for sports practice, colleges will provide few difficulties in enforcement of the new amateurism. Rather it will be in industry and the armed services that there will be little interest and less action. Much thought must be given to this problem.

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Obviously a world-wide program of Education for Amateurism must be instituted, of education for its adventure and challenge, not, as is the case today, of mere instruction as to the rules and prohibitions of our sports codes, essential as they may be. Perhaps, as some historians believe, our Western culture is declining and the attitudes of professionalism that is, of extrinsic rewards for effort, of material gain without limitations of any kind, are so entrenched in our minds and mores as to overwhelm amateur ideals. Personally this seems unsound thinking. The present challenge of the U.S.S.R. and even more that of the Far-East countries during coming decades will force a response from us far beyond our present awareness. Our adaptation energies are far from exhausted. They only need such re-creation as can occur through a re-birth of amateur sports.

Education for Amateurism has never been tried on any extensive basis. As stated in the first paragraph of this article, the arousal of enthusiasm for a positive and challenging program should be its first and main concern, something to catch the imagination of jaded and skeptical men. It should give an impression of a new and fresh approach to the problem.

Second, this new program should raise again the concept of honor not only among individuals but between institutions and sports associations as well. Emphasis must be placed upon the distinction in the Olympic oath between the glory of sport on the one hand and the honor of country on the other. As Avery Brundage pointed out in a recent address, '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 competed in the Olympic Games, at least three people have lied'. Unfortunately we must all concede that at least three people have lied, not because they are lacking in honor, but because to conform with the present narrow Olympic code is impossible; they face a choice between signing or of attempting an Olympic Games without contestants.

Third, such Education for Amateurism must remove it from the realm of unearthly phantasy and present it as a practical device, a working agreement by which national and international sports programs attempt to secure a fair and equal basis for competition. It should be as obvious and down-to-earth as agreeing to the size of a football field or of a discus circle: to make things fair for everyone. College conferences agree to *no Spring practice* for football or to a fixed date for the first basketball practice. These are limitations in time intended to give everyone an equal and fair opportunity. These are the methods of amateurism and should be recognized as such.

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There are many more aspects of such an educational program, but these three are basic: an intriguing challenge, a re-birth of honor, and a sound foundation of practicability. Amateurism in itself has no value. After all it is merely a word which can be created and discarded when its definition is no longer valid. But amateurism as an agreement among honorable men to provide fair competition in vigorous sports is one of the basis roots of all civilizations. It's worth fighting for.

Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee, recognized this when he said recently, 'I think that every educational institution should give a course in amateurism along with its athletic program. Teach the principles of fair play and sportsmanship... Think of the beneficial effect it could have on the world'.

#### CODE OF AMATEURISM

As to amateurism, a re-writing of its definition is long past due. To rule that an amateur participates in sport *solely* for pleasure and *purely* as a recreation was not realistic when first stated and is less so today. A time trial at 3/4 distance was never a pleasure in 1890 anymore than 10 or 20 repeated 440s is today.

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Further, to begin our definition with 'an amateur is or does...' implies strongly that there is but one narrow line of conduct that is amateur; all others are something else. The fact is that any sound code must

be as wide and flexible as the range of differences within the individuals it is intended to cover.

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In short, then, amateurs are those who participate in sport within a wide range of interest and effort, from 'solely for pleasure' to 'grim concentration', but always within the limitations required by the more primary activities of a normal and well-rounded life: a full-time vocation or school program, social or professional duties, etc., and further, to implement such limitations, amateurs are those who receive no material gain, direct or indirect, from their participation in sport.

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To support such a definition, rules would include present restrictions on material rewards, but they would also require the filing of an affidavit signed by responsible officials of industry, armed service, school or professional organization, that the athlete has carried a full-time load of work during the past year and has had no special vacation periods for training purposes.

The question arises immediately as to the feasibility of such a code and whether it is worth the burdensome red tape that would be added to the present load. The answer to the first is that it is at least as feasible as the matter of material reward. Just such a rule has been in force and effective for 25 years or more in various college sports conferences in the United States. Only a full-time student making normal progress toward a degree may represent his school. A failing student is made ineligible for an entire half-year of competition. Enforcement is effective because it is always done by regular college faculty members.

Industry and the armed services will undoubtedly present a more difficult problem for their interest is not so likely to be in terms of sports restrictions and moralities.

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One allied suggestion has already been made by various persons that Olympic Games contestants should wear the colors of their local club or school rather than that of their country. These persons are intent upon lessening the present dangerous trend toward national rivalries in the Games. But such a plan would cause natural local rivalries to exert a certain degree of supervision of rules conformity. To compete 'for the honour of country' is all too often interpreted as for its glory and tends strongly to hush all critics and wash away all sins.

In any case, and regardless of possible imperfect enforcement, recognition by amateurs of the priority of vocation or school over sports training and competition, and of a limitation in time for preparation as of material rewards would in itself be clarifying and helpful.