

Sport at school

Notions never taught at school

Michel Clare, editor of an important French Daily: L'Équipe, made a careful analysis of the reason why national pride paralyses the development of sport at school. We consider this statement well worth mentioning and consequently we are quoting the conclusion of his article in the present issue of our Bulletin.

In spite of all we were told, we found that there were more than time recorders to be seen at the Olympics of Rome. In the great individual contests such as swimming and athletics, competitors such as Berruti, Snell, Halberg, Elliot or Murray Rose, Konrads, etc., did not do too badly as nationals of the capitalist countries! New-Zealand is not a totalitarian country. Peter Snell, Murray and Halberg did not have the advantage of the latest modern running tracks to train on. (Peter Snell saw a cinder-track for the second time in his life whilst in Rome.) It happened to be winter at the Antipodes, prior to their arrival in Rome to compete in the Games, these athletes had to train on macadamized roads during their luncheon break, or after day's work, since they could not run on sodden grasstracks. The German champions

are not robots, not are they put on show as prodigies at fairs for the entertainment of the public: Karl Kaufmann, world recordman of the 400 m., is also an accomplished music expert. Murray Rose can recite at length long extracts of Jean Anouilh and of Tchekov's works. One could say practically the same of all of them, as there has never been such a galaxy of note-worthy alround personalities among the Olympic swimming and athletics champions to be found at a sport international gathering. I refer of course to the athletes I came in contact with, and I propose to mention a few of them: the marvellous story of the seventeen years old, 100 m. back-stroke Olympic champion Linn Burke, who is a catholic and was endeavouring to convert to her religion, the whole of the American women swimming team! You can thus see that they do not limit themselves to the athletic side only, as beside sport, they are alive to other things, as they are above all human beings.'

Further, referring to Mauriac's books, Michel Clare declares:

'Better than any other writers, you have succeeded in making a very thorough analysis of the psychology of the adolescent who is so apt to fall into extremes, so prompt in going into rapture over things considered useless and utterly purposeless by middle-class men. You have perceived what qualities are required to make a twenty years old champion. You can also understand why young men devote sometimes years daily training, often for nothing, but just for the... fun of it. The champions I met never gave me the impression that they are leading a restrained type of existence, on the contrary, they firmly believe that they are living much more intensely. For them as well as for Victor Hugo, it is the others 'who are just existing instead of living'. People who have not experienced the exhilaration of this kind of life which is so full of satisfaction, will never be able to understand it.

'The superficially-minded people will always entertain a false idea of the value of sport, this explains all the misunderstandings which occur on the matter. Sport is not merely a means of military preparation, or of physical education or hygiene, it is an inspiration to mankind in order to find a way to a new notion of happiness. Physical education and hygiene are factors of minor importance, what really matters is that sport

is a means of affording wonderful opportunities and possibilities for youth all over the world, it is a marvellous adventure giving its adepts the chance of visiting new countries, of making life-long friends, of meeting new and interesting people who have a great affinity for each other from the fact that these sportsmen believe in the same ideals. It is an adventure well worth living to the full, with all ones heart mind and body, by this, I mean one must give out a lot of oneself ('Even to excess, since one never love these things moderately', said Pierre de Coubertin.)

'Seen from this point of view, which is that of the Olympic Movement, one forgets all about the differences of ideology, of national spirit, also the difference of systems and technicalities, since the athlete stands always alone when he fights his own battle in the stadium, he is encouraged by his own personal pride which is maintained only by the influence of his own passion. In order to attain such tremendous feats, it is vital to believe in one's vocation, to love in absolute sincerity the sport one has gone in for and to have a deep faith in the capacity of one's own youth. This last factor, so essential, seems to be entirely lacking in some sportsmen. They are not responsible for this as they were never taught these notions.'