

SPORTS IN BLACK AFRICA

CONCERNING THE ABIDJAN GAMES
(IVORY COAST)

At a time when the tropical talk is to win over to the cause of sport the new African countries and to help direct them in their organizing initiatives, it is gratifying to observe that the French have been among the first to send their representatives to Africa. Actually, Abidjan (Ivory Coast) was the first city to hold, last December, *The 1st Games of Friendship*, which gathered the new Centro-African countries of French expression. Whereas the French fulfilled their commitments, they took the lion's share, a thing which was bound to happen when they won 27 gold medals out of 40; it is only fair to say that they launched an

excellent propaganda in favour of promoting sport in that part of the world. We even think that the best way of encouraging and promoting a higher standard of sport in these new countries is to send them first rate contingents comprising the best athletes from Europe and America. From what we gathered concerning the Abidjan Games, the whole structural of the organization of sport remains to be done not only with regard to the technical field of action but as far as making these populations realize the value and importance of sport in education. As far as these Games are concerned, they were held in the best Olympic tradition but were

imbued of the rural jovial spirit pervading in the Tropics, where everything is of relative importance.

This happened in Abidjan Sport's Palace, when at the close of a boxing match, the President of the Republic, Mr. Houphouët-Boigny, was seen stepping over in the arena when he bestowed the medal on the winner. The gentleman in question discarding loftily all pretence of protocol had the most popular gesture of the evening: a passionate boxing match which alas ended in a first class uproar which old Europe would not have failed to disavow.

The Abidjan Games have certainly contributed to advance the cause of sport in Africa, their objects being to make people realize the valuable boon sport could be for them with regard to improving their social status. In a modern State, nobody should ignore the social aspect of sport and the benefits it brings to civilization. Now that the Abidjan crusade is over, let us congratulate the knights without armour who brought French sport to Africa, they in their quality of pioneers, did manage to sow the good seed there. The next African Games are to take place in Dakar (Senegal) in 1963, and it is to be hoped that the Maghreb may be represented. (Maghreb is the name given by arabian geographers to the extreme northern part of Africa: Morocco, Algeria and Tunis.)

FRIENDSHIP

L'ÉQUIPE of Paris gave, last January, an editorial article under this rubric concerning the Abidjan Games. It said: 'It is quite obvious that sport in Africa is in its initial stage. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that certain of their athletes compare favourably with our best champions - a confrontation too severe may misfire and defeat the aim in view. We are strongly in favour of a more lenient formula, such as for instance: "The African Games crowned by a friendly confrontation between the winners and the athletes of the Metropolis."

In the immediate present, it is essential to sponsor the entry of the countries belonging black Africa within the various International sport organizations (International Federations, above all, *Ed.*) then within the National Olympic Committees. With regard to this matter, let us recall the fact that, at the Session in Athens, on Comte de Beaumont's recommendation, (French member of the International Olympic Committee), this Committee virtually promised to help to promote the development of sport in African and Asiatic countries which have become independent. They lack chiefly skeleton units of sport leaders. To that end, a collaboration between the International Olympic Committee and UNESCO would undoubtedly allow to supply technical advisers to these young new States, the duties of whom would

be to hasten the formation of national organizing units.' This is what was reported by the special correspondents of L'ÉQUIPE sent to Abidjan to watch the Games at close quarters.

France took the first step in this direction and Mr. Maurice Herzog, High Commissar of the Youth and Sport in France, who attended the Games himself, stated that these 'Games of Friendship' ought to become the Games of the whole of Africa including the African countries of English expression, if an agreement could be reached with Great Britain. Sir Stanley Rous, president of the International Football Federation, who was also present at Abidjan, declared himself in favour of the scheme, this is fairly conclusive.

There was also a mention regarding the access of women to the Games, they are to compete in the following events: volley-ball, swimming, athletics and basket-ball.

In our opinion, we think that France has opened the door wide to sport in Africa. The first step: encouraging its development has been taken.

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We also think that the International Football Federation has been the first to understand the African problem. An African Confederacy has been founded and the third African Cup has been held this year in Ethiopia when the African teams met at Addis-Abeba, from January 14th to January 21st, 1962. Nine nations took part in the event and the four finalists were Ethiopia, Egypt, Uganda and Tunisia. The general meeting of the African Confederacy took place on January 17th and January 18th, 1962 when the matter of the AFRICAN CUP OF CHAMPION CLUBS was discussed. Let us mention that twelve African national federations are affiliated to F.I.F.A. Other countries, which have recently acquired their autonomy, are sure to follow soon.

We hope that the other International Federations of Olympic sport will follow and devote their efforts to promote the development of sport in Africa. As far as we are concerned, we think that African sport is capable of being organized and set afoot administratively fairly rapidly. We know that most of the countries of the former Occidental Africa will soon asked to become affiliated to the International Federations. Robert Busnel, who happened to be present at the Abidjan Games, worked and defended the interests of the Basket-Ball Federation since he accompanied the French team there.

According to the reporter of L'ÉQUIPE, it is quite evident that the African aspire to send a worthwhile contingent to participate in the future Olympics. They possess the means to do so, we have in our mind the Senegal, Dahomey and the Ivory Coast where first class pugilists can be found for

instance. In supplying technical and administrative assistance, the International Federations must try to avoid wounding national susceptibilities and avoid a repetition of what happened at Abidjan when a certain amount of ill-feeling was felt within the technical delegations and petty annoyances and even small incidents occurred on the stadium, near the boxing rink. At the forthcoming Games at Dakar, this touchiness is bound to grow worse in view of the fact that the Senegalese possess already a fair amount of experience in sports matters. In order to play its part of educator, International sport must not assume too patronizing an attitude for, the Black African is proud of his independence, and perfectly justified to be so in our opinion. He must be considered as a student and not looked upon as a child. The white man technician, who holds great sway at the present time, must realize that he only plays a transitory part. Black Africa, concludes the reporter of *L'ÉQUIPE*, will reach her full realization in the world of sport in proportion of the African technical methods of education which she will find for herself and which will be adapted to African temperament.

We think that this judicious grasp of the situation coming from a competent journalist, who was on the spot and could see things for himself, is most valuable and worth our notice. No doubt, the International Federations will benefit by these advices since the arduous task of acting as technical advisers fall on them. Once this initial step is taken and only then, we think that these new countries will have to set themselves to rights with the International Olympic Committee in view of organizing their National Olympic Committees. To this end, they must have direct contacts with the International Olympic Committee as it has already happened in the case of Somalia (ex-Italian colony) when that country sent a black delegate to Lausanne where he gathered valuable information for the organizing of his future Committee. Unfortunately it was not followed up and nothing came out of it for the meantime. No blame attached to the International Olympic Committee of course!

Do not forget that the International Olympic Committee did not wait for the autonomy to be proclaimed in these new countries

before recognizing the countries which were already organized according to Olympic Rules. Thus, out of the total number of 100 National Olympic Committees recognized by the International Olympic Committee, *thirteen* are of African origin. They are: TUNISIA, SOUTH AFRICA, UNITED ARABIA, ETHIOPIA, GHANA, KENYA, LIBERIA, MOROCCO, NIGERIA, UGANDA, RHODESIA, SUDAN, TANGANYIKA. The International Olympic Committee is also represented in Africa by FOUR members who, it can be said, display a very great activity. They are: Messrs. Reginald Honey (South Africa), Alexander (Kenya), Touny (United Arabia) and Benjelloun (Morocco).

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE GAMES AT DAKAR

Encouraged by the Madagascar and Ivory Coast successful experiences, Senegal, which has been attributed the Games to be held in Dakar at Easter 1963, is determined to make an outstanding success of this great sport festival. The Government has voted large credits to be put to the disposal of Dakar in order to build sports installations conceived on very modern line. These are in course of erection and consist of a Stadium and a 'Parc des Sports', each able to accommodate 8,000 spectators. As for the new Stadium called *Liberty*, it is expected to accommodate about, 30,000 people. The responsible bodies are also busy with preparing the equipment of colleges, schools and military barracks which are going to be used for housing the various teams. Following the example set by the Ivory Coast and Madagascar, Senegal is operating in close collaboration with the French High Sports and Youth Commission. Last February, Colonel Crespin, delegate of the French Olympic delegation, flew in destination of Dakar. Mr. Maurice Herzog's assistant was accompanied by Mr. Grosborne, technical installation Chief Inspector, and Mr. Tony Bertrand, General Secretary of the recently held 'Games of Friendship'. The task of organizing the forthcoming Dakar Games is to be assumed by him in all probabilities. As can be seen, France is doing all she can to promote the development of sport on popular line in the African Countries of self-expression.