

The search for the solution of social problems

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It is a fact that, in sport, it is quite useless to expect to rise to great heights without regular daily training, which should be both rigorous and multiform, and which covers the development of all the qualities, physical, nervous and psychological.

As a corollary, this training needs adequate time for its accomplishment.

It implies by the same token profound changes in the doctrinal and social aspects of sport.

In many countries, the organization of sport has deliberately been adapted to local

conditions and has solved this problem of time.

We have as examples the American university, the 'demonstrator' at the National Sports Institute in France, the athlete of the U.S.S.R., the Egyptian officer athlete and many others.

The implanting in Western sporting circles of more rigorous methods have given rise, here and there, to the appearance of certain very obvious objections: fear for the liberty of the individual, for the respect of social and family life and a holding back in view of the

hardships involved in 'total training'. It is for this reason that it seems to us useful to describe briefly in what follows the solutions which have been thought up and applied in widely different countries with regard to top class athletes.

AMERICAN STUDENTS

For a long time the system adopted by American universities has been criticized. We quote Mr. Avery Brundage, President of the International Olympic Committee, who, quite recently in an article, spoke of the suspicion aroused outside America by the athletic scholarship system.

It is first of all necessary to be in possession of the facts. At the swimming session of the International Council of Military Sport at Toledo, in 1959, an American trainer, Mr. Mowerson of Michigan State University, was, on several occasions, questioned by Europeans on the true situation in the United States. This is what he had to say in reply.

— 'In the U.S.A., many prosperous businessmen, political leaders and representatives of many different professions have had their studies made possible thanks to sports scholarships. In America, the possibility of entering a university is offered to young men possessing exceptional athletic qualifications and whose means do not permit them to pay for a university education.

The only condition for the granting of these scholarships is that the recipient can obtain above-average scholastic results — and this is a fact too often ignored. These scholarships are not given for athletic prowess alone, but also to young men possessing particular talents in science, the arts or music.

The system of awarding scholarships varies considerably according to the university. The importance given to sport in some of them, the rules which govern the competitions between groups of universities, traditions and naturally the financial situation are preponderant factors.

It is the duty of the governing bodies of the universities to determine their policies and to fix the kind and number of scholarships available. Apart from this, a considerable check is made by the 'National University Sports Association' which lays down very strict rules. Other means of control also exist. The possibilities of sports scholarships are largely restricted and they are far from being an ever-open door giving free places to students in schools with unlimited funds.

The number of scholarships allotted is limited and varies according to the sport. It is obvious that a sport attracting many spectators, such as football or basketball, will receive more scholarships than an individual sport such as swimming, boxing or athletics. Besides the number of scholarships allocated in each university varies considerably according to its geographical position. The schools which are particularly

taken up with football give 33 annual scholarships, but only 5 or 6 for athletics, none for boxing and perhaps one or two for swimming.

A school, where athletics is the dominant sport, will 'give from ten to twelve scholarships for this sport, and will cut down to a large extent the number of scholarships given to other sports.

The expenses of a university education consist of the tuition, the books, room rent, restaurant expenses and pocket money.

Usually, a university scholarship only covers a part of these expenses, such as the tuition. and in certain cases, food and lodging as well. It is rarely the case that a scholarship is given which covers absolutely all expenses. Many athletes are required to work every day for a certain number of hours in order to earn the extra funds necessary to cover the rest of the cost of education. There are hundreds of different outside jobs which the university offers to the athlete. The best-known are : waiting at table, dish-washing, cleaning and doing various office jobs. Furthermore, and this is important, the recipients of scholarships have to pass their intermediate examinations. If they fail, they are obliged to leave. It is not unusual to see a big American football champion one day exciting the enthusiasm of hundreds of thousands of spectators, and the next day to be found collecting the rubbish in the empty stadium.'

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All this explains the temptations which the champions find impossible to resist, sometimes going to those extremes which have so recently been seen in university basketball circles.

It is true that, since athletic scholarships exist, certain abuses sometimes lead to scandals.

This does not alter the fact that the whole success of American university sport rests above all and before all else on all the material facilities which the student enjoys. These include magnificent stadiums and gymnasiums a stone's throw from the classrooms, first class material very highly-developed by the sports firms — because this creates business — specialist trainers, nourishing food, all these means are at hand, ready at all hours of the day.

Compare all this with the lot of the European student, and you will understand.

Recently, however, Western Europe has timidly tackled this problem and is taking steps along these same lines.

SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED BY THE SPANISH AND ITALIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEES

The Spanish Olympic Committee has created scholarships which provide for the expenses of specialist training for young athletes of the future.

This organization possesses an excellent sports centre in Madrid, which consists of a gymnasium, sports installations and rooms for 50 selected athletes. These athletes live and eat together and go to the school of their choice. This can be either the University in the case of students, or a Technical School in the case of artisans. Every day the athlete trains at the Sports Centre under the supervision of an experienced national instructor.

The 'Gymnasio G. Moscardo' in Madrid and its equivalent in Barcelona dedicated to the champion Blume, houses 100 talented young men chosen from the following Federations: Athletics, Swimming and Gymnastics.

A high moral tone is demanded. All serious breaches of the basic rules of the institution entail definite expulsion.

The experiment has turned out very satisfactorily. While still engaged in serious study, the recipients of scholarships have broken numerous Spanish records. The gymnasiums of Madrid and Barcelona will shortly be opened to promising young people in other athletic fields.

This initiative has been followed by Italy.

At Formia, the Italian Athletic Federation has a magnificent sports school at Gaeta on the Appian Way which leads from Rome to Naples. It provides perfectly for the needs of modern training and is reserved entirely for athletes. Recently, the Federation has nominated 20 promising young people with suitable intellectual and athletic qualifications. They are housed in the stadium in a building constructed for this purpose. They work under the direction of the best trainers and, at the same time, they carry on their studies in the universities, colleges and high schools of the town.

With the same idea in view, let us note a recent proposal of the French Swimming Federation to get together at the National Sports Institute the best 'hopes' in order more efficiently to combine studies and training simultaneously.

THE SWIMMING SCHOOLS OF THE ITALIAN NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (C. O. N. I.)

Swimming is one of the most suitable sports for schoolchildren.

The Greeks said of an uncouth young man: 'He can neither read nor swim.'

Holding the view that swimming is essentially a sport for young and very young people, the Italian "National Olympic Committee" has decided to introduce children to this sport at a very early age. Swimming has always had very young champions. As early as 1932, a young sixteen-year-old Japanese won the Olympic title for the 1500 metres which is considered the most severe of all tests.

The Australian revolution in swimming gave us, in 1952, Rose and Crab as cham-

pions at the age of eighteen, and then produced the two Konrads, Ilsa and John, who, at thirteen and sixteen, established world records.

The Italian Olympic Committee (C.O.N.I.), faced with the problem set by the instruction in swimming, has found a revolutionary solution. It is summed up as follows: due to Quantity', and this is being acted upon by the creation of swimming centres. To open new pools is not enough; schools must be founded.

Today each large town has its centre, directed by a chief instructor with assistant instructors under him. Boys and girls from seven to twelve years old are admitted. At fourteen, the pupils are obliged to leave the centre and enrol in the club of their choice.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARMY

Since the end of the Second World War, military sport has emerged as the third power along with the International Olympic Committee and university sport. Made effective by the activities of the International Council for Military Sport, new solutions to the problems of training the best men have been found.

WHAT IS MILITARY SPORT?

The Founder-President of the International Council of Military Sport has replied to this question as follows:

'Too many people think that military sport is carried out in barracks in an unimaginative way and that it is a pale copy of its civilian counterpart. For a long time and in many countries, this was probably the case. That is to say that a more or less felicitous transformation took place of the classic sports into military form. Today, however, military sport is on the way to establishing itself to a far wider degree than ever before, after having taken into consideration the importance of the role that it can and must play.

'To be of service, directly or indirectly, basic military training and preparation for combat must certainly be the main aim, and it would be a grave mistake to think otherwise. At the same time, however, military sport can help in many ways the civilian federations in their own sphere, notably in Olympic preparation and should soon become a powerful and useful instrument for raising the standard of the rank and file as well as of the chosen few. There are here enormous possibilities which must be understood and fostered.

'In its functioning, military sport counts on the support of the Federations, but it is not subsidiary to them. In many countries, the liaison has become closer both with ministries and organizations concerned with Youth and Sport.

'To cultivate a comradeship between fellow-countrymen as well as with members of other countries is also an important task, and this

will help to cultivate the way of life and the mental attitude proper to young people and to soldiers.

'Such a mission is sufficiently important, comprising as it does three different aspects — the military, the national and the international — to encourage Governments and High Commands to support military sport. Indeed, whether as a soldier or as a sportsman, it is simply a question of making a man.'

THE ATHLETE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Monsieur L. Bontemps, President of the French Fencing Federation, has published in *Sports en France* an article based on general information gathered and checked by him when in the U.S.S.R.

He describes very clearly the organization of sport in Eastern Europe, both from the point of view of its direction, and also concerning a solution to the problem of the State Athlete.

THE ORGANIZATION OF SPORT IN EASTERN EUROPE

From the beginning, sport has been part of a vast programme. It is considered as one of the branches of the national effort, a social benefit and an excellent means of propaganda. Nothing has been spared to bring in the masses, from schooldays onwards.

In the schools, teachers, masters and instructors teach all the subjects according to the gifts and capacities of their pupils, without ever neglecting physical education. This is the basis of the programme and will remain so, even when the individual becomes a champion.

Everything has been done so that the individual may find the best and most agreeable conditions in which to practise sport. (We use the term 'individual', since it is well-known that the equality of the sexes in this part of Europe is absolute.)

The installations of all kinds are remarkable, whether in the open air or under cover, and all constructed with every modern convenience.

Clubs

There is a very real difference compared with our Western ideas.

The clubs are, in fact, corporate groups, but the name 'club' obviously has another meaning. Dynamo, Torpedo; Locomotive, Minerul. They cover the country like a great multiple stork. This means that, if you change your place of residence, you will always be sure to find in your new town a branch of your club, and you will remain a member of it provided you have not changed your profession. There is a single exception for the students who have their own society, but who, their studies once finished, must choose the club of their profession. The Army also has its own clubs... Red Army

in the U.S.S.R., U.D.A. in Czechoslovakia, Honved in Hungary and the Army Central Club in Rumania.

The Federations

These depend on a 'Committee of Sports and Physical Culture' affiliated to the Council of Ministers. Apart from the administration section, which is especially important because of the vital propaganda this committee disseminates, there is a Technical Committee composed of trainers of the first rank, and generally presided over by one of the Vice-Presidents of the Federation. This is the committee which has charge of athletes of the first order, and the responsibility of forming National teams. Each sport forms a distinct section.

The Government takes upon itself the task of the creation and the upkeep of all sports installations, the organization of all international manifestations, or those which are of special importance. The main funds of clubs and federations come from member's subscriptions and above all from the Trades Unions. Since each worker is a Trades Unionist, a percentage is taken from his subscription to finance medical expenses, cultural expenses and naturally those of sport.

It can be appreciated how great is the potential at the disposal of sports organizations. The modest price of seats, offset by the large number of spectators, bring in an important revenue, and since there are no professionals, sport is thus self-supporting.

State Athletes

This idea, which has already been much spoken and written about, belongs perhaps to the future. The athlete does not earn his living from his sport in the sense of getting a salary out of it. From the time he reaches a certain standard, which is generally high, he is put into a definite category. When he is classed as a 'Master of Sport' he depends solely on the Technical Committee of his Sports Federation.

It is this Federation which will fix his programme for the whole year, and will decide, after numerous medical examinations, whether he has need of a rest by the sea or in the mountains, or of special cures or other treatment. While he is away from work, he will receive his normal State salary, and his expenses will be paid by the Club, the Federation, or even the State. Taking everything into consideration, this system is more easily workable there than in Western Europe.

Salaries being themselves limited, he cannot find his standing lowered, since a first-class athlete receives the maximum in his professional category. This is a valuable guarantee in our opinion.

If he belongs to the Army, he has the advantage of a more rapid promotion, which is free from all favouritism. Much has been

said in this respect about Major Zatopek. It must not be forgotten that he speaks five languages, which is not to be despised in an officer, and that he is a man of great intelligence. A 'Master Emeritus of Sport' will benefit by being given better accommod-

ation, which is sometimes free, and will receive presents — furniture or ornaments — and a small car. This is the theory of sport as a social asset, where the improvement in the living conditions of the individual is preferable to professionalism. It is thus easy to see that sport is certainly 'directed'.