



Mr. Jean-François BRISSON, editor of "Le Figaro" (France), and one of the co-founders of the Pierre de Coubertin Committee, is already well-known to our readers from the article we published in No. 17, entitled "*The Olympic Reform*".

Worthy sportsman, he was champion of France in a speciality favoured by the Marquess of EXETER, the 110 m. hurdles. Creator of the modern decathlon, Jean-François BRISSON has always been not only an avid athlete but also a keen sports official.

# An attempt to define MODERN OLYMPISM

*In the proposed modification of the Statues of the Olympic Charter, issued last year, the Pierre de Coubertin Committee proposed the following new Article 3, in accordance with the intentions of the man whose work they wish to preserve:*

"The aim of the Olympic movement is the glorification and safe-guard of the sporting spirit with a view to the perfection of man. It considers sport as a means of developing both the love of disinterested effort and the moral qualities this requires. By inviting athletes from all over the world to compete in friendly rivalry every four years, it also contributes to the preservation of peace among the nations."

*Olympism is therefore sport practised in a certain spirit, under certain conditions.*

*The purpose of a circus - and one wonders what justifies the derogatory sense so frequently given this word when applied to sport - is to offer a show of astonishing muscular feats, in the execution of which the acrobats show proof of courage, exceptional physical qualities and superior technique. In this, they are like the champions who dedicate their lives entirely to sport also in order to offer a high quality show, and make a living out of it. But obviously the latter have no reason to want to be included under the Olympic flag.*

*Olympism is a legacy of Hellenism the term that RENAN used to describe "the ideal of perfection in the literature, art and philosophy produced by Greece".*

*Olympism therefore goes beyond the bounds of sport, hence the definition of the Pierre de Coubertin Committee quoted at the beginning of this article: "The glorification and safeguard of the sporting spirit with a view to the perfection of man."*

*In a letter dated 21st April 1961 addressed to Maurice HERZOG, at that time High Commissioner for Youth and Sport in France, the President of the I.O.C. Mr. Avery BRUNDAGE, expressed himself in the same terms. He wrote: "The main aim of the Olympic movement has always been, not so much the breaking of records and the winning of medals but the drawing of the attention of all countries to the benefits to be derived from a complete national programme of physical training and "amateur" sport, with a view to training groups of stronger and healthier boys and girls, and making better citizens of them."*

*From the Olympic point of view, in fact, records and extraordinary feats are in no way excluded but they are to be considered as a consequence not as the essential aim. (1).*

### DISINTERESTEDNESS

*The most important facet of Olympism is the bringing together of the athletes of the whole world, of whom there is no point today in trying to pretend that they are still "amateurs" - amateurism, somewhat depreciated, is considered by many as an outdated, anti-social distinction - but of whom it must still be possible to say that they are disinterested because they seek no monetary reward for the incomparable show they offer the world every four years - they give it, and because the motive enabling them to submit to the rigorous discipline of training is essentially their love of sport.*

*In contrast with the criteria of profitability and financial success, the chief goals of our industrial society, the quality of disinterestedness represents the moral factor giving Olympism a more exalted dimension than its simple sports value.*

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*(1) It is in fact the emphasis placed on record-breaking that inevitable leads to abuses like doping.*

rather than making a distinction among athletes, Olympism, on the practical level, makes a distinction in fact among sports. Certain sports, because they do not have great box office value and because they do not bring important commercial interests into play, are quite naturally part of the Olympic programme. A wrestler, or a swimmer, who uses little equipment and does not cause the crowds to come flocking, will not have to face the same problems, the same temptations and the same pressures as a skier or a footballer. That is why those in favour of cutting down the Olympic programme are numerous (1), the severity being exerted on the choice of sports rather than on the status of the athletes.

*In the case of the Olympic Games, the wish to comply with an ideal fits in well moreover with the actual evolution of modern sport.*

*According to an opinion widely held today, a champion can only reach his peak if he devotes himself full-time to sport. This theory is less obvious than appears at first sight, in that a phenomenon of saturation and fatigue often deprives the "wage-earner of the stadium", for whom sport is no longer a pastime but a job and a routine, of part of his abilities.*

### THE VALUE OF THE CHAMPIONS AS EXAMPLES

*The Olympic athlete, even if he is helped materially during his training, even if he enjoys certain favours in the exercise of his profession, can and must preserve a value as an example in so far as sport is not his sole concern in life. The young, whatever their origin, their means and their ambitions, may feel then that the way to the Olympic Games remains open to all.*

*To often at a high level is depicted as a compulsory choice: either studies and a profession or training and competition. The Don SCHOLLANDERS and Alain CALMATS are presented as extremely rare exceptions, not to be quoted as examples.*

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(1) *which would not, as Coubertin himself suggested, prevent the holding of Olympic tournaments in sports not included in the programme, before the opening of the actual Games.*

*The result: faced with the choice, and even before, the majority give up the whole idea.*

*The first to give up are those who feel that any effort deserves its reward in the form of hard cash and if the speciality that tempts them does not lead to lucrative gain, they are wasting their time and effort.*

*The next to abandon are those who consider, quite reasonable, that a sports career, which by the nature of things is short and risky, is not the right choice if such a career is incompatible with the gaining of a situation with a future.*

*That is why in many cases, and contrary to another generally accepted idea, the stars of sport, who are just as admired and popular as film and pop stars, and just as deserving, have ceased to be emulated.*

*At the circus, everyone applauds the trapeze artists, who risk their lives every evening; no one has any desire however to imitate them.*

*For a boy or a girl to want to imitate an Olympic champion, for the latter to preserve his value as an example, he must not create the impression that he is making a career of sport. He is neither a performing artiste, nor an instrument of propaganda come to win laurels for his country, his regime of his race, nor even an agent promoting a given make of equipment. He must appear above all as a keen sportsman for whom the competition itself brings its own joy and its own reward, for this joy and this reward are within the reach of all.*

## THE PYRAMIDAL STRUCTURE

*Between the Olympic victor who triumphs at the top and the ordinary sportsman who never wins a race or a match, there is really no fundamental difference, there is simply a difference in intensity and level*

*Olympic sports must not allow the gap - which, in spectator sports, is becoming wider and wider - to grow too between the ordinary sportsman who practises sport only in his spare time and the elite athlete dedicated to a single speciality.*

*The geometric figure that best exemplifies the notion of Olympism is the pyramid: a broad base of sportsmen narrowing to an elite at the top through the free play of rivalry, and without any gap between the sports conceptions and motives of the not so good and the best. This is the condition on which the delegations of each country can claim a representative significance in relation to the whole populations competing through them. And while we are talking of images like the pyramid, Olympus, the home of the gods and Olympian Jupiter to whom the Ancient Games were dedicated, is a mountain with a high peak, the culmination of a broad base.*

*In the minds of the public, it is necessary therefore for Olympism to appear as the precious heritage of a unique moment in history when the search for human equilibrium experienced its greatest success.*

*Olympism has sufficient prestige to efface and dominate the vain quarrel about the definition of amateurism.*

*The athlete inspired with the Olympic spirit is the one who - whether an obscure beginner or an acknowledged champion - practises sport for his own pleasure, for the honour, and not for the money or glory even. This is the essential purity symbolized by the Olympic flame.*

*As for the Olympic oath, it should be considered the assertion of a dominant faith: the main reason encouraging an Olympic athlete to go in for sport, is that he enjoys it and the greater the sacrifices demanded of him in the way of training the more he enjoys it.*

## HOW TO REVIVE THE INTEREST OF A BLASE PUBLIC

*The Olympic Games ought to be considered by the peoples of the world as a great public festival, and to a certain extent a compensation, every four years, for the sports and the athletes that do not as a general rule monopolize the limelight in the press and on the air.*

*A campaign should be undertaken to ensure that the Olympic spirit and the Olympic ideal should become clear notions in the minds of the public, so that the label Olympic should not be applied only to the four-yearly Games or only to what is superlative in sport. This goal will be achieved when, in ordinary parlance for example, "olympic form" is not only taken to mean the form enabling the best representatives of a country to win medals and pulverise records, but when the expression is applied to health, strength, endurance, agility, and prolonged youth rewarding the keen sportsman. For the believer in physical exercise, sport is a pastime and a recreation as much as a discipline and a source of health; it guides his whole style of living.*

*Finally, let us not forget that the wonders achieved by science and modern technology have somewhat blunted public enthusiasm and its faculty of admiration. There is nothing to prove that a blasé public will not in the long run grow tired of muscular efforts and become interested above all in motorised speed, in space adventure and the feats of machines created by the minds of men.*

*Only a more elevated ideal than the mere striving after victory in the stadium can safeguard the love of sport and physical effort.*

*This is the task that the Olympism of tomorrow must endeavour to perform.*

Jean-François BRISSON